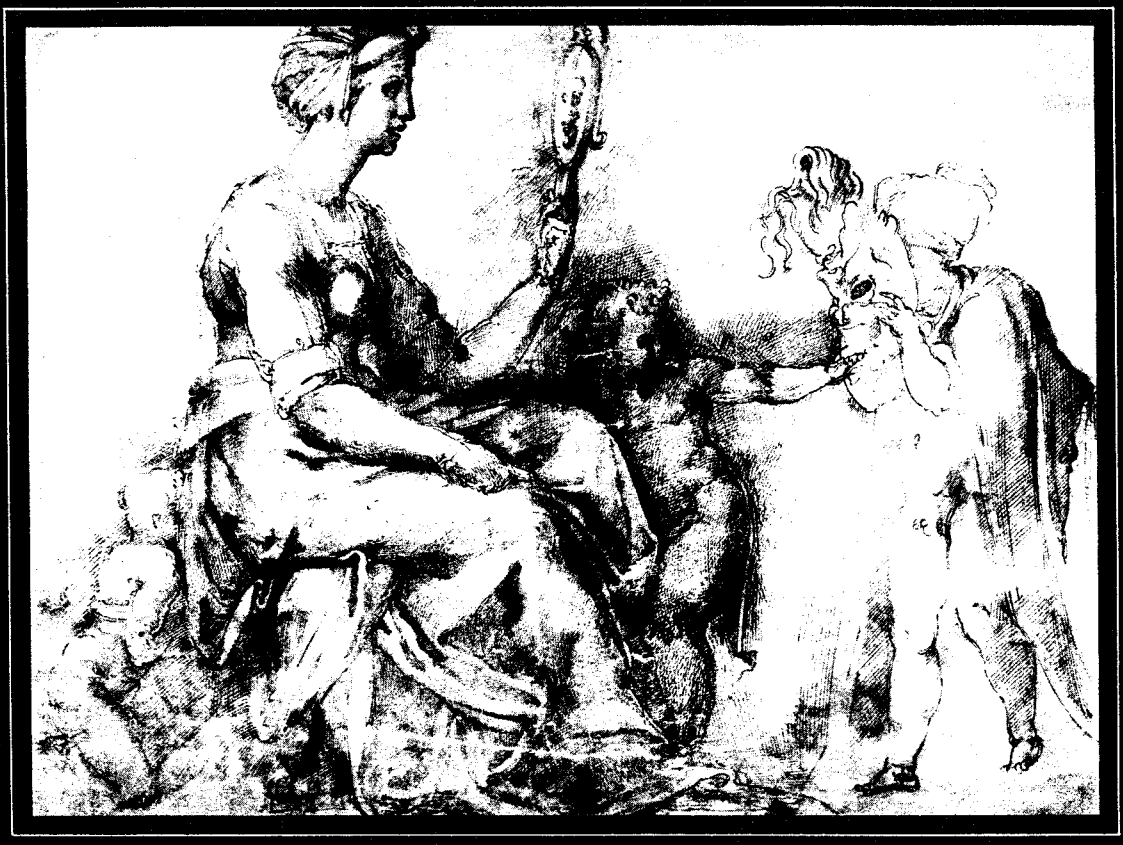
Conservatism as Novelty



Chronicles of Culture

Volume 7, Number 11 November 1983 $1.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

4 Editor's Comment — Leopold Tyrmand

5 *Social Register*

Opinions & Views

6 The Road with Ill Intentions — Daniel O'Neil
—Nicholas Gage: *Eleni*

8 The Medium & the Message — Gary S. Vasilash
—Robert Moss and Arnaud de Borchgrave: *Monimbó*
—Desmond Ryan: *Deadlines*

11 Blithe & Mean Spirits — Charles A. Moser
—Nathan Miller: *FDR*
—*Down & Out in the Great Depression:* Edited by Robert S. McElvaine

14 Junior Giants — Joseph Schwartz
—Edmund Wilson: *The Forties*
—Frederic Prokosch: *Voices*

17 Preaching and Probing — Dennis Q. McInerny
—Zoë Fairbairns: *Stand We At Last*
—Elisabeth Young-Bruehl: *Vigil*

20 Philosophical Sleight of Hand — Gordon M. Pradl
—Leonard Peikoff: *The Ominous Parallels*

23 Of Poetry, Pseudo-Psychiatry, and Prophecy — Bryce Christensen
—Peter Medawar: *Pluto's Republic*
—Arthur Janov: *Imprints*

26 Speak No Evil — John E. Haynes
—Michael Straight: *After Long Silence*

28 Killed by Kindness — Stephen J. Sniegoski
—Drew Middleton: *Crossroads of Modern Warfare*

30 Normalizing the Abnormal — Betsy Clarke
—Malcolm M. Feeley: *Court Reform on Trial*
—Norval Morris: *Madness and the Criminal Law*

32 Driven to Tears — Carson Daly
—Albert Bermel: *Farce*

Commendables

34 Skewering Schlesinger: *Coolidge and the Historians*
West of Belle Isle: *The Glass Highway*
Books & the Crisis of Culture: *From Author to Reader*

In Focus

35 Yeah, Yeah, Yeah — Brian Murray
—Peter Brown and Steven Gaines: *The Love You Make*

36 A Friend Indeed? — Carlisle G. Packard
—Stuart Miller: *Men and Friendship*

37 Doing Good With Dirty Hands: *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*
Business as Usual: *The Businessman in American Literature*

38 Strategies of Prose Packaging: *The First Man on the Sun*
The Artist as Island: *A Prodigal Child*

39 Perceptibles

Waste of Money

40 Wallowing in Rock — Larry Williams
—James Howard Kunstler: *The Life of Byron Jaynes*

41 Blind, Deaf & Dumb — T. Mark Kulish
—Arvo Tuominen: *The Bells of the Kremlin*
Postmodern Mush: *The Rape of Clarissa*

42 Throw the Bum Out!: *Confessions from Left Field*
Corpses on the Couch: *Leadership, Love & Aggression*

43 Of Peter Pan and Pig Heads: *Children of the Future*
Conspiracies and Other Cankers: *The Factory*

Screen

45 Horror Shows — Stephen Macaulay
—*National Lampoon's Vacation*
Movies Made Simpleminded: *Visible Fictions*

Polemics & Exchanges

46 On the Motherhood Maze — Kathy L. Werner
47 Mrs. Waite Replies — Kathi Waite

The American Proscenium

48 Consistency

49 The Middle East Quagmire—Logic
Twisted Notions

50 The Dream that is Dixie

Journalism

50 A Mad Dog, an Englishman

Liberal Culture/16, 25

Vol. 7, No. 10 October 1983

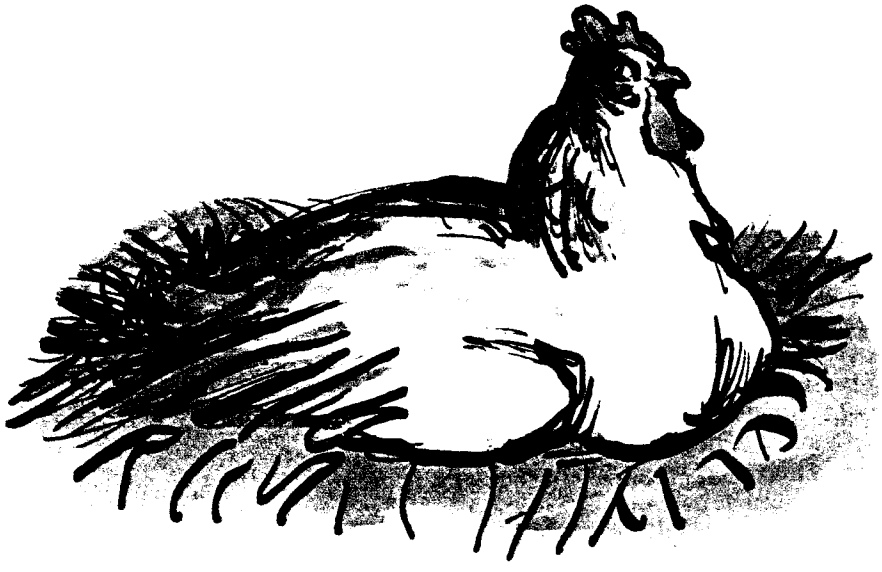
Qualitative Living in a Quantitative World

Comment: O'Neil; Morrisey on Cohen *(The Truth About the Neutron Bomb)*; Geary on McClanahan, McEwen, Cherry *(The Natural Man, Fisher's Hornpipe, In the Wink of an Eye)*; Christensen on Moravia and Appelfeld *(1934, Tzili)*; Hawkins on Olson and Goldman *(The Rise and Decline of Nations, U.S.S.R. in Crisis)*; Thorne on Lowe *(Stieglitz)*; Hallman on Gardner *(Art, Mind, and Brain)*; England on Morris and Wachtel *(Crossroads, Joe The Engineer)*; Levine on Ground Zero and Barraclough *(What About the Russians—and Nuclear War?, From Agadir to Armageddon)*; London on Lesher *(Media Unbound)*; Cooper on Lacouture *(Léon Blum)*; J. D. Hoeveler Jr. on Rothman and Lichter *(Roots of Radicalism)*; St. John on Reagan and Finch *(Ronald Reagan Talks to America; God, Guts, and Guns)*; Commendables; In Focus; Perceptibles; Waste of Money; Screen; Music; Art; Correspondence; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Liberal Culture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles of Culture
Vol. 7, No. 11 November 1983

Conservatism as Novelty



Chronicles of Culture (ISSN 0163-1187) is published monthly by The Rockford Institute; President: John Howard. Editorial and business offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61103. Editorial phone: (815) 964-5054. Circulation phone: (815) 964-5811. Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Associate Editor: Gary S. Vasilash; Managing Editor: Rebecca Woosley; Assistant Editor: Bryce Christensen; Editorial Secretary: LeAnn Manning; Publisher: Richard Vaughan; Production Manager: Lindy Ellingwood; Composition Manager: Anita Fedora. Printed by Wilson-Hall Co. Technical Services: Marge Wollschlager Composition. Subscriptions: $18.00 one year.

Cover: "La Prudenza," by Michelangiolo Buonarroti (1475-1574), from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library. Original vignette by Warren Chappell. Graphic materials within the text from *Silhouettes* and *More Silhouettes*, both edited by Carol Belanger Grafton (New York: Dover Publications, 1979 and 1982 respectively).
Copyright © 1983 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

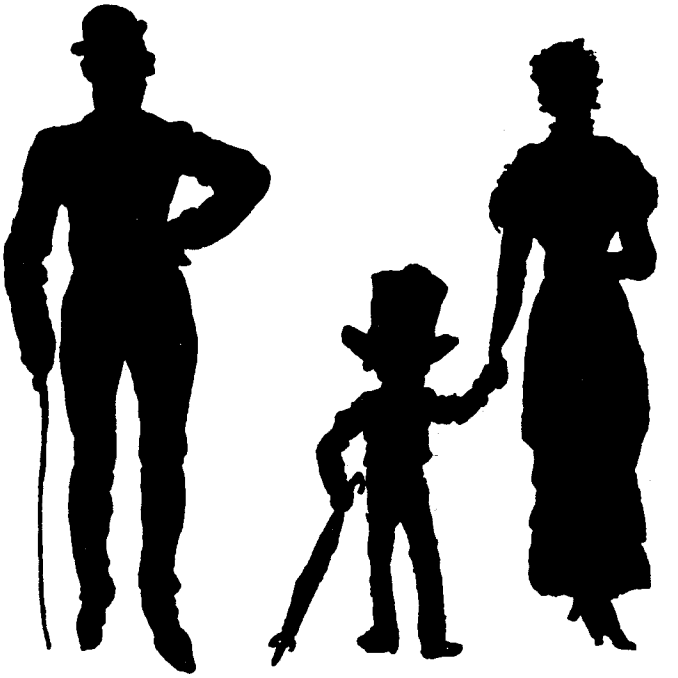
EDITOR'S COMMENT

In its present, i.e., "modern," meaning, conservatism is a rather new notion in America. Many will object to the description of conservatism as a novelty; others will see it as some sort of wordplay, solecism, or incoherence. Yet even a cursory overview of American history will bear me out. American history originated with the exploration of the new, and, actually, the country has never ceased its relentless march forward in time and space. From its inception, the American universe has been constructed on ideas of advancement and betterment: the environment, man's overall well-being, political institutions, and social relations were all targeted for nonstop improvement. Soon, a civilization emerged whose most sacrosanct directive was to harness the natural phenomenon of change and transform it into the idea of progress—an idea that had been long and fervently discussed in Europe, but which had never distilled there into a power capable of successfully pervading both society and culture. That's what happened in America.

Here, for nearly three centuries, that idea saturated both history and everydayness with a sense that *everything* was improving—all the vicissitudes of individual fates notwithstanding. An all-encompassing feeling that everything is getting better and better all the time accompanied each generation. This improvement was omnipresent: household facilities and amenities, the availability of basic material commodities, acceptability for ever-larger social groups, health and longevity, the quality of democratic freedoms that might require constant struggle but which could be pursued by any means—everything was pressured to roll forward. The figure of speech: "They came up with a new way, gizmo, approach, contraption, project, gimmick . . ." could serve to denote progress in peeling potatoes or reorganizing legislatures. It ultimately became an idiom. Admittedly, some parts of reality did not move quite so rapidly: racial discrimination and ethnic discrepancies impeded the joyous procession of unbounded opportunity, but the essential vector was clear and unmistakable.

How could one afford to be a conservative in such a constantly changing social landscape? Thus, there were no conservatives in America for a protracted stretch of history; those who might have merited the name either did not associate their leanings with any ideology or were simple reactionaries opposed to reform, progress, and change for various reasons. Nineteenth-century positivism and the Civil War finally relegated major conservative impulses to a state of complete disgrace: such inclinations were evicted from the enlightened person's mental equipment and civic decalogue. During the Roosevelt era of tampering with economic mechanisms, conservatism stood for a hopelessly truncated, purely economic reaction to New Deal transgressions; its simplistic label was as remote from its intrinsic meaning as doggerel is from poetry. In the 1950's conservatism was vaguely linked to a hard-line position on communism—a meager and lackluster identity, particularly in an era that also produced the Trumans and the Kennedys.

Conservatism owes its philosophical renaissance, epistemological rise, dazzling career in human sentiments, profound significance for the rebirth of mankind's common hopes, and sudden identification as Western civilization's neo-St. George to the 1960's—which otherwise constituted the nadir of this civilization's spiritual fortunes. That was an era, as everyone now knows, when gawkiness was called idealism, callowness was hailed as wisdom, charlatanry proclaimed itself sincerity, frenzy stood for happiness, conformity meant independence, subservience to totalitarian regimes abroad was camouflaged by shrill anarchism, groveling before ugly totems was described as freedom of thought, worship of foolish wickedness was termed openness to ideas, crude irresponsibility was acclaimed as liberation, while the wealthy celebrated poverty without relinquishing their wealth and were saluted as progressive instead of being branded as hypocrites. It was a time when unaccountable fecklessness was accepted as guilelessness; people were supposed to relate to each other through a single word—*love*—as if no other interdependence between them had ever existed—after five millennia of civilization. The heady feeling that each day was constantly getting better was dead. Suddenly we were fighting a well-intentioned war to save a small country from a common and certified enemy, but our soldiers were forbidden to win that war by those who had sent them to the battlefields in the first place. Suddenly, our own country was full of rabid friends of *our* enemies, who were celebrated in *our* press and in *our* univer-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sities that had been built by two centuries of *our* toil and thrift. Some sinister forces were at work, not openly but hidden instead beneath the sordid and abstruse propensities of people we trusted, people who were supposed to be the finest crop of *our* civilization—scholars, artists, writers, newsmen, celebrities of *our* public glamor. Suddenly, those people began to teach us that vile murderers are more precious than their innocent victims, that sexual deviations are moral riches, that parasites who wish to live off society are society's salt, that foul language is wit and elegance, and finally, that the drug-saturated gurus on college campuses and in New York editorial offices know better than we do what's good for us.

This was when American conservatism finally came of age as a self-supporting system of ideological propositions—the subject matter of philosophy. This was its best chance in centuries. History had offered it an occasion to embody a magnificent protest against the undoing of the American civilization. It was called upon to weld the fundamental values of the Occident to American experimental empiricism. It was summoned to emerge as the moral and intellectual shield of our civilization, as a splendid rampart against the disintegration of values and criteria that had once made possible progress, free inquiry, and a normative human order. Almost overnight, conservatism acquired an identity in America: thanks to the *danse macabre* of American radicalism, the conservative principle quickly shed its image of backwardness, dullness, Babbittry, and American Gothic and transmuted itself into that last refuge of humanness—reason, the sense of normalcy, and life's purposefulness. By the end of the 1960's, when the tidal wave of radic-liberal aberration—which had proved to be impotent in politics—had engulfed culture and created a vision of *homo novus* as a village idiot playing with his orifices (it was called self-realization and declared to be mankind's liberation), conservatism became a Weltanschauung, the only ideological mooring for those who wanted to save their own human worth. It came to be the last and only safeguard of rationality, moderation, pluralism, tolerance, and democracy designed as a framework of freedom rather than as a prop for fraudulent rhetoric. Conservatism was no longer calculation or inclination—it had transfigured into an edifying emotion capable of moving both individual souls and masses. To some extent, it has been successful in that awesome task.

Unfortunately, the 60's were followed by the 70's—the apogee of the Liberal Culture, which proved to be a far more complex and insidious enemy of the basic human tropism toward a meaningful life than the glorification of unreason and immaturity had been. The Liberal Culture is the outgrowth of decades of efforts by the stratum of learned people who, for the sake of power, have debauched the notion of freedom, conquered the national education and communication systems, and engendered the current, unprecedentedly vicious climate of moral and cultural nihilism. Racial and social revanchism began to thrive; feminism—that is, institutionalized hysteria and gender-based fascism—went on a rampage; pederasty, incest, and sadomasochistic submission to political tyrannies became accessories of fashion. Why people who were begotten by the progressive, ever-advancing, tolerant American civilization, nurtured by its security and warmth, and endowed with every opportunity Homo sapiens could claim, were determined to annihilate that civilization as a functional and permanent value is incomprehensible, obscured in murky mystery. The so-called New Class intellectual (Liberal Culture's mercenary) consistently argues that he wants to enlarge the human psyche, to make the world better, to bring to the needy what they require—but he cannot explain why, in order to achieve it, he must destroy the universe of human hopes, seminal customs, timeless sentiments, everlasting dreams, cherished traditions, delicate and treasured intricacies of feelings. Somehow, he intends to make the world better by making it infinitely worse, by interrupting the cycle of American progress, by contriving elaborate propaganda systems which—via cultural seduction, pop music, and show business—are bent on depriving children of their childhood,

continued on page 44

Social Register

Leonard Bernstein, the conductor with a heart as big as a New York City landfill, recently turned 65, into something which can be described as the world's oldest preadolescent.

According to a newspaper report, the conductor said that it would be "pompous" to have a party for his birthday. Instead, he held a nuclear disarmament party, at which the required garb was a light-blue armband, signifying the United Nations. Others who were unable to attend the gala—Elizabeth Taylor, Lauren Bacall, Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward—said that they would be suitably attired, just the same. About the dress code, Bernstein said, "It lends purpose to a birthday and achieves something more than a round-bellied number." We presume that next year's requisite togs will include a designer-styled, cone-shaped hat, tastefully touched by a diminutive hammer-and-sickle logo, in lieu of the now prole-like alligator and similar symbols. It's an oh-so discreet fashion worn by the privileged (and overprivileged) that serves Andropov best in our poor, confused country. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Road with Ill Intentions

Nicholas Gage: *Eleni*; Random House; New York.

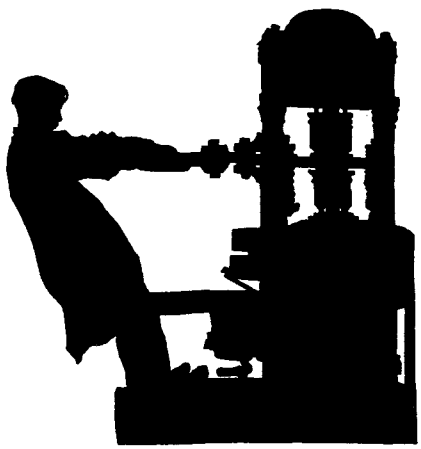
by Daniel O'Neil

How numerous are the stories of unrecognized heroism. Gage's *Eleni* is such a story. A peasant woman risks her life to save her children from abduction during the Greek Civil War. As a result she is tortured and murdered by the communist revolutionaries. Thirty years later her American-educated son returns to Greece to recreate her story and to seek vengeance. He finds a Greece where the left is in ascendency and the communist barbarities are being whitewashed and romanticized. Hence he tells the story of his mother and her travail.

Gage's book, in addition to its merit as a description of heroism, represents a valuable addition to the literature of village life. Most people still live in villages, and this book captures the flavor of such an existence: the loyalties, hardships, and joys. It should join the ranks of such village classics as Banfield's *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society,* Brody's *Inishkillance,* and Foster's *Tzintzuntzan.* But the focus of *this* book is on the communist attempt to revolutionize Greek society, with Gage's village serving as a microcosm. It is another poignant tale of the exploits, regimentations, and indoctrinations promoted by those who would create the "new man" by torturing and eliminating the old man. The portrayal of Gage's clan—his mother fighting to preserve the integrity of her family and interacting with friends and acquaintances—personalizes the story of man's struggle against the modern ideologues. It makes communism a demonic reality in much the same way as Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* makes nazism a demonic reality.

Eleni invites a scrutiny of the ramifications of revolution. Modernity has produced more than its share of revolutions; hence, there is ample opportunity to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio. Have the prerevolutionary promises come to fruition? Has greater good than evil resulted? Has it been worth the effort? It might be persuasively argued that the ramifications of the great revolutions represent a debit. They seldom, if ever, brought the promised benefits, but instead introduced new discord into the body politic. They tore apart societies once characterized by some degree of societal unity. They entrusted power to dogmatists having little sympathy for man or human nature. They created hordes of refugees. Usually their limited, and highly advertised, gains would have been achieved without the revolution.

Probably the first great Western revolution that affected our world was the Reformation. Although it sought to reform the Christian Church and to return to a romanticized pristine purity, its primary accomplishment was to fragment the Christian West into over 300 warring sects. Hence Christianity became less believable and less able to confront the new pagans of the Enlightenment. How many children of the Reform today give any credence to or feel any empathy for the cardinal tenets of the Reformation: justification by faith alone, predestination, and self-interpretation of Scripture? Unfortunately, the reforms that did eventually ensue stemmed from the enthusiasts and fanatics. How much more humane and civil might the subsequent history of Christendom have been had change come from persons like St. Thomas More and Erasmus rather than Calvin and Loyola.



Our own American Revolution, which owed a debt to the Reformation and Enlightenment, permanently divided the English-speaking peoples. Without it, Canada and the United States would probably be one country today. Americans would perhaps possess a more workable system of government than our 18th-century antiquated variety and be less dependent upon the Lockean-Enlightenment orthodoxy that permeates our culture. But in truth, as revolutions go, the American one was mild and the results not unbalanced.

The French Revolution promised liberty, equality, and fraternity and delivered on none. It carved France into two nations with each often preferring external to internal alliance; "Better Hitler than Blum!" It brought civil war to the European Commonwealth, but a different kind of war—"nations in arms." The resulting anarchy enthroned Napoleon, who became the model for numerous lesser men. France, once the leader of Europe, probably recovered from the trauma of the revolution only with the Fifth French Republic and its quasi-monarchical presidency.

Solzhenitsyn is perhaps the best interpreter of the Russian Revolution with its dogmatism, intolerance, genocide, and mass destruction. Despite the obstructionism of the ancien régime, who would deny that virtually everything of worth and beauty in contemporary Russia stems from the prerevolutionary period—the music, art, novels, ballet, and architecture? What material compensations are produced to balance against the mass

Dr. O'Neil is with the political science department at the University of Arizona.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

destruction of a culture? Political pilgrims once cited official government claims of universal literacy and improved health care. (Such unsubstantiated claims have also blossomed in Castro's Cuba and are now being spewed by the camp followers of the Nicaraguan junta.) Russia had her revolution and slid into Oriental despotism.

When one turns from the major revolutions to some of the more interesting sideshows, a similar picture emerges. Mexico—the real target of the Central American Marxist-Leninists—had her 1910 revolution. A part of the ruling elite feared for its future after the retirement of the aging Díaz. Madero, son of one of the wealthiest families, issued his pronunciamento. The result was mass devastation. Anarchy reigned; the country was torn apart; thousands died of starvation. There were villages in which every female from 12 to 65 was raped. The population of Mexico actually declined and most campesinos did not eat at the prerevolutionary level until the late 50's. The revolutionary elite paraded the usual social and economic promises and indeed incorporated some of them in the 1917 constitution. But there was minimal social and economic benefit for the average Mexican. When life returned to normal, Mexico was still burdened by a ruling elite, similar to the prerevolutionary elite but fostering different slogans and wearing different uniforms.

Ireland—the "land of saints and scholars"—had her 1916 Rising. Ireland had been an integral part of the United Kingdom and had secured a promise of post-World War I home rule. Many expected Ireland to evolve in the direction of Canada and Australia. But a small elite of fanatics, obsessed with the cult of blood sacrifice, revolted on Easter Monday, 1916. The dramatic exercise ignited the country and the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21) ensued. Ireland secured Free State status followed by a civil war over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The independent Ireland was divided politically and geographically. It is probable that without the Rising and the resulting Anglo-Irish war and civil war, Ireland would have secured her independence intact and avoided the subsequent Ulster terror. Yeats probably deserves the last word on the Irish revolution:

> Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man: 'Ireland shall get her freedom and you shall break stone.'

Why do virtually all revolutions fail if evaluated in terms of their prerevolutionary promises and objectives? Why are the ramifications so different from the pledges? Why is the revolution always betrayed? There are a number of reasons for the inevitable failure/doom of revolution. One is the arrogance of the revolutionaries. As they perceive it, they possess the one and only truth, and their situation is unique. History starts with them and their cause; there is little they are prepared to learn from the past. Both classical wisdom and Judaic-Christian precept prepare us for the fate of the arrogant. A second reason is revolutionary simplification. Ordinarily, the revolutionaries portray life as an Armageddon, a battle between good and bad, saints and sinners. This distortion, while eliminating complexity, makes it difficult to fathom reality. Third, the revolutionaries virtually always fail to appreciate any inherited goods and services. They take for granted the accomplishments of the previous regimes, failing to comprehend the difficulty of maintaining systemic order. When, following their reign of destructiveness, they secure power, they must assume the role of the previous regime in maintaining order and producing goods and services. Since the attributes of an effective revolutionary are seldom those of a good administrator, they generally lack the expertise for this pedestrian task. Finally, the revolutionaries, with their rhetoric, raise the level of popular expectation. They condition the masses to expect change and improvement in their individual lives. They promise far more than they are ever able to deliver, hence the resulting frustration.

With such a dismal record of accomplishment and a marked record of atrocity, why the continuous appeal of revolution? To romanticize revolution seems as grotesque as flaunting the Spanish Inquisition or New England witch-hunts. Why has man failed to learn from the past; why must he start from scratch; why must he learn and relearn? There are perhaps six reasons to account for the continuous appeal of revolutionary mythology.

First, revolutions, like wars, are seldom presented in retrospect as they actually were. The new, victorious elite must legitimize itself by interpreting the revolution as a mass, popular, heroic rising against evil incarnate. It must exaggerate the difficulty, the suffering, and the overwhelming odds that were transcended. It can seldom acknowledge the important role of foreign intrigue and foreign aid (e.g., Castro's victory was actually won primarily in Washington and New York, rather than Cuba). Its regimented control of education and media will allow no counterinterpretation of the "glorious" event. Ultimately, the objective story of the revolution must be told by those who have escaped or avoided its sway.

Second, it is difficult in all societies to accept that most people will have to live a pedestrian/prosaic existence. The routine responsibilities of life cannot be avoided. Man must work, experience defeat as well as victory, and eventually die. Pain is mixed with pleasure. Revolution seems to offer a break with this unpleasant fact; it seems to restore romance, excitement, and utopian transformation.

Third, Western liberalism encourages an obsession with change. It compares one's own society to a transcending ideal rather than to other mundane societies. It lacks any historical/comparative perspective. It is seldom content with things as they are, and in urging reform usually presents the society in the worst possible light. For the liberal's children to embrace revolution is the logical next step; it is rational and consistent behavior.

Fourth, the perennial boredom of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affluent contributes to revolution. Revolution offers the affluent excitement and purpose, and, should it fail, the rich can seek pleasant exile or even reintegration with the old regime. (Most traditional systems tolerate a bit of youthful radicalism.) It is the bored affluent, not the poor, who initially sponsor revolution. The people currently in power in Nicaragua disproportionately are children of families that enriched themselves under Somoza.

Fifth, although they are a small minority, there are persons who stand to benefit from revolution. Marginal types denied power under the previous system can move for a time into the political arena. Persons desirous of wielding absolute power often succumb to the revolutionary appeal. The modern revolution entrusts the ruling elite with not only political, but also economic and cultural control. The new class, in addition to power, will enjoy a style of life denied the masses who will practice communal austerity. For the masses the primary difference will be that under the previous system one was poor and complaining; under the revolutionary system one is poor and regimented.

Finally, the stupidity of the target regime contributes to the appeal of revolution. The failure to reform and hence develop a clientele with a stake in the system leaves a citizenry vulnerable to revolutionary polemic. Lack of imagination, the absence of a consistent policy of judicious force, the failure to cope in the propaganda sphere—all these leave the initiative with the revolutionaries. It is difficult to stimulate heroics for the status quo. Only in retrospect do many—e.g., the boat people—bemoan their failure to resist the revolutionaries.

Nicholas Gage's *Eleni* deserves wide circulation. By focusing upon one Greek village under revolutionary communist control, the book presents communism, its methodology, and its objective in a far clearer perspective than virtually any available political tract. It confronts the reader with the demonic. *Eleni* is a magnificent addition to the gulag literature. □

The Medium & the Message

Robert Moss and Arnaud de Borchgrave: *Monimbó;* Simon and Schuster; New York.

Desmond Ryan: *Deadlines;* W. W. Norton; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

Monimbó is a problematic book. The book is part of the burgeoning American tradition that is especially evident in the cinema: the sequel. It tells the further adventures of Robert Hockney, hero of *The Spike.* Readers of the new book are constantly reminded of its predecessor; the anchoring metaphor even emerges in *Monimbó,* as the hot-headed-but-righteous Hockney blasts his editor: "'And I haven't heard anyone around this building say that we ought to spike a good story because it might embarrass the CIA in a fairly long time.'" Little has changed. In order to understand why *Monimbó* presents difficulties, it's best to approach it through another recently published novel about a reporter with a similar temperament. This book is *Deadlines* by Desmond Ryan, a relatively young writer who was born in London and educated at Oxford. Ryan is now the film critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer.*

Christopher Reeves's efforts notwithstanding, Woodward and Bernstein have crushed Clark Kent. The modern reporter —*investigative* is the still-coveted adjective—is by far more of an antagonist than Jefferson could have dreamed of. Ryan recognizes that there is a reaction formed against and a certain revulsion felt about those who deem it their noble purpose to ferret out not only Achilles' heels but also cases of athlete's foot and to make it public knowledge, to satisfy what is sanctimoniously called the "public's right to know." The public's desire or need to know are never considered. If they don't like it, then they are told "tough." If the consequences are of great moment, such as the breaching of national security, then the journalists wrap the First Amendment around themselves (which, through many wearings, is losing its shape) and say "tough."

Ryan's protagonist is an investigative reporter. Instead of skirting the issue and thereby implying that it's the status quo, he gets into the matter in medias res. The reporter comes up with a story about some political shenanigans, but the city editor of the paper hesitates to run it because people are, he claims, against the media campaigns targeted at politicians. Since the reporter is the sympathetic figure in the book, Ryan deftly turns the tables: the reporters are beleaguered. Ryan must have studied rhetoric very closely at Oxford, for he is persuasive about the plight of his reporter.

To his credit, Ryan does raise a point about journalism in America that is often overlooked. It will have a profound effect on what people will know. There are two aspects to this point. One is that there are large newspaper corporations that are buying up both big-city and small-town newspapers on a regular basis. Newspapers are having a tough time making a go of it, given increased operating costs and competition from the electronic media and other periodicals. Many independents can no longer afford to make a go of it. The newspaper business has become big business. The bottom line is the key concern in counting houses. News and information are no longer treated as things having to do with facts; they are products like soap flakes and cereal. The other aspect takes the form of *USA Today,* which is touted as "The Nation's Newspaper." Perhaps Gannett, its publisher, is to be commended

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of Chronicles of Culture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by those who like to glean information by reading rather than by sitting in front of the matrix that is Dan Rather. However, one of the arguments that used to be raised in the days when the video challenge emerged was that newspapers could go in depth while the televised news shows could only stay on the surface. *USA Today* shows that that argument is of little concern anymore; its news is presented in bite-sized pieces. Both the consolidation of many newspapers under few roofs and packages like *USA Today* portend a homogenization of the news. It is not a good sign for those who believe in a pluralistic society —the more so, given the ideological nature of many of those who are gaining control over the conduits of information.

Ryan is a storyteller. If one can suspend incredulity and accept the good-guy status of his reporter, then one can move through the book at a good pace. The novel is, in effect, an airport novel: something for distraction. The author is, however, a better-than-average writer; he doesn't succumb to clichés. And, as he is an outsider in Philadelphia, the setting of the novel, he pays attention to detail that helps add verisimilitude to his story. It is unlikely that much attention will be paid to *Deadlines* for the simple reason that it is a minor novel.

This brings me back to *Monimbó.* Compared to *Deadlines,* it is a horrible novel—*as a novel.* Messrs. Moss and de Borchgrave, both top-notch writers of nonfiction, make Mickey Spillane sound like Oscar Wilde. Consider some of their more inventive phrases: "a long, passionate kiss"; "a smoldering Latin girl"; "the girl, at once sensual and vulnerable"; "the vivacious, busty blonde . . . seemed young enough to be his daughter." The authors presage "a long, hot summer," and they aren't talking about meteorology. An editor who is invariably an idiotic creep who opposes Hockney is given the surname *Finkel.* Hockney had some rough edges in *The Spike,* but he has undergone skin and soul sanding and is a veritable paragon in *Monimbó,* as indicated in this dialogue:

> 'What kind of reporter are you, anyway?'
> 'I hope I'm an honest one. I did a big exposé on the KGB a couple years back that you may have seen.'

Monimbó isn't writing: it's a paint-by-number set.

If that neat trick can be performed and the content is divorced from form, then the latter is totally unacceptable for anyone who thinks that scenarios for *Hart to Hart* TV shows aren't literature. Conservatives who have yet to praise the novel should be very specific about what they are hailing. Conservative creators of literature are those like Kafka and Proust. Moss and de Borchgrave don't show themselves capable even of sharpening either of those two's pencils. To hail Moss and de Borchgrave as being the authors that modern conservatives need is to ignore the anchor of conservatives of all times: a respect for tradition. Although Desmond Ryan has written a book that supports liberal attitudes, liberal critics know better than to lavish praise on *Deadlines.* If ideology is suspended—and ideally, this is an effect of taking the content out of the form—the reason why this is so is evident: Ryan is not in the big league. The liberals can depend on, say, E. L. Doctorow to toe the party line: he'll do it quite well. To praise Moss and de Borchgrave *as writers of fiction* is to call matters of conservative taste into doubt.

When the form is ignored and the content considered, then *Monimbó,* like its predecessor, is a fine book, one that addresses another sociopolitical problem that very well may explode on the scene at any moment. In *The Spike* the authors address the KGB's efforts to spread disinformation throughout the U.S. Given the before-mentioned consolidation of newspapers, it's obvious that unless the press is as vigilant about what's going on in its own house as it is about what's going on in everyone else's, then the KGB will have an easier time of things. That is, fewer flaks will be required to infiltrate the decreased number of sources of information, the news bureaus of the flagship papers that feed the rest of the fleet. As is pointed out in *Monimbó,* Americans are ready to believe virtually anything about the FBI and the CIA when it comes to matters of wrongdoing. When the KGB is even mentioned, he who utters those three letters is jeered at as a simple reactionary, a fossil from the McCarthy era. Hopefully, *The Spike* had (and has) the effect of making a greater number of people willing to accept the plausibility—if not the reality—of KGB activities directed at and performed in the newsrooms of this country.

In 1972 *The War for the Cities* by Robert Moss appeared. It is a work of nonfiction; *Monimbó* is a fictional gloss on the better book. *The War for the Cities* analyzes urban guerrillas, those who use terrorism in an attempt to achieve their ends. Today, little is heard about domestic terrorists. But it wasn't so long ago that the SLA, the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, and others were making headlines on a regular basis. Other areas—Northern Ireland, Central America, the Middle East—aren't so lucky. Since terrorist acts in the U.S. of the 60's and 70's didn't have much effect and since those acts were performed at a point in time more distant than yesterday's newspaper, there is a tendency to pooh-pooh the idea that "revolutionaries" in America could have any effect today. There hasn't been a coup in this country for over 200

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years, so there is no reason to expect one at any time in the near future. As Moss shows through case studies, isolated groups of urban guerrillas are ineffective with regard to achieving their goals and sometimes have the effect of achieving contrary ends as counterrevolutionary measures are taken. He also points out that the general acceptance of the existing systems in the West defeats radical change. As he explains:

> A successful insurrection is impossible without considerable popular support, or at the least public neutrality. The strength of western societies in the face of political violence is precisely that most people regard the system as legitimate and that those who feel differently are in a small minority, and normally an isolated minority. It is when governments fail to solve major national problems that the legitimacy gap begins to widen. It is in this sense that urban guerrillas could act as a political catalyst in western societies as well as in the third world.

The possibility exists here.

Moss outlines three causes of political violence. One is "the sense of relative deprivation." In the not-so-distant past, riots broke out in Newark, Detroit, and other cities because some of the people were dissatisfied with their lots. Another cause is "the appeal of violence." Moss points out that bourgeois intellectuals are often found leading revolts. There are various reasons why this is so, including the simple fact that an educated person has had "the chance to form a general view of society and elaborate a strategy for insurrection." Violence becomes chic: witness the photos of the Weathermen with automatic rifles and bandoliers. Finally, there is what he calls "the legitimacy gap." As stated in the previously quoted passage on the subject, this third factor would seem to be the least unlikely to have a serious effect in the U.S. However, Moss observes:

> The Nazis showed how terrorism can be used to erode the foundations of a democratic state. A sustained campaign of political violence has a corroding effect on any society. The government eventually comes under attack for failing to keep order in the streets; parliament is increasingly by-passed as a mere 'talking-shop'; force displaces reasoned debate and confrontation takes the place of consensus.

It is hard to be smug in the face of history.

The Spike shows that disinformation isn't promulgated by a few editors and reporters here and there, but that it is the result of a *systematic* effort. As Claire Sterling and others have shown, there is an international terror network. It is another of the hydra's heads. Just because that head doesn't *seem* to be leering at the U.S. at the present moment is no reason to assume that the country is safe. It should never be forgotten that America, since the time of Lenin, has been the number-one target, the primary objective. Moss and de Borchgrave do not overlook the obvious; in *Monimbó* they simply extrapolate from current events. What they envision is not a pleasant view.

Moss makes two assertions in *The War for the Cities* that must be borne in mind. First, that although radical students and extremist groups (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan) support political violence, "the real danger lies in the grievances of the ethnic minorities." Second, that although "American cities are vulnerable to political sab-

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

What Are Words For?

"The history of European and American literature is marked by writers who have seen the reshaping of the world in terms of a peculiar social or political vision as their calling . . . . Shelley, Ruskin, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and, currently, Norman Mailer have been afflicted with delusions of themselves as messiahs who will bring the gospel to the unenlightened, cure society of its many evils, and restore some kind of sociopolitical Eden among the satanic mills of the modern world. All too often, these people . . . mistake their intellectual squirming and caudal vibrations for the stirrings of art . . . . Writers who use their names and reputations to proselyte for questionable causes really achieve nothing more than self-advertising. Perceptive readers are always suspicious that such writers are less concerned about the poor, the oppressed, and the unfortunate than about press clippings, expense-account living on the college lecture-and-reading circuit, and adulation by the media, the academics, and sophomore humanities majors. After all, it is very possible these days to make a comfortable living by being a professional conscience."

—from "Writing Poetry & Striking Poses"
by Robert C. Steensma

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Perceptibles—Waste of Money
The American Proscenium—Screen—Art
Music—Journalism—Liberal Culture

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otage . . . the real battlefield of the urban guerrilla is in men's minds." In *Monimbó* there are several givens, none of which is implausible. One is that the Cubans want to cause instability in the U.S. Another is that ghettos in places like Miami have a very low flash point. Finally, that the high-tech infrastructure in this country is open to breakdowns that would have serious and wide-ranging consequences. The first is obvious; the Cubans didn't take in radical Americans for the sake of the sugar crop. The second has been shown to be the case by the rioting that took place in Miami's Liberty City area in 1980. Tensions, as Moss and de Borchgrave show, cannot be anything but increased by the influx of aliens, such as those that Castro shipped out from Mariel. The final given, the vulnerability of the infrastructure, is a most unpleasant one to think about, as Americans have become enthralled by the Machine. In 1973 a book entitled *The Coming Dark Age* by Roberto Vacca appeared; he had thought about the subject. His thesis is that systems upon which people depend are growing too big, that they will get out of control by 1985-1994, and thus the dark age. He writes:

> As yet, a crisis in a single system would not be enough to bring a great metropolitan concentration to a halt. But a chance concomitance of stoppages in the same area could start a catastrophic process that would paralyze the most developed societies and lead to the deaths of millions of people.

Vacca's vision is an apocalyptic one and his rhetoric is suitable to it. Still, as he moves through the book, checking off the possible points of breakdown and their effects—massive traffic jams, power failures, computer losses, etc.—he makes the apocalypse seem more imminent than distant. Moss and de Borchgrave show what could happen in New York City if a massive protest, traffic jam, riots, power outages, and the bombing of the World Trade Center were to occur—not by chance, but by design. The design is plausible, which makes it all the more horrible.

The Cuban (and Soviet) scenario detailed in *Monimbó* is not one that would have the immediate effect of causing a full-blown revolution and the subsequent welcoming of Castro to Boca Raton. It is one that would, as Moss puts it in *The War for the Cities*, initiate "a vicious cycle of terror and counter-terror that will alienate popular support from the government." It would cripple the leaders; the minds of many people would desire an answer, any answer. *Monimbó* is bad fiction, but an interesting prognostication. That is, to borrow a line from Moss and de Borchgrave, which they applied to a story by their Hockney, "The piece [is] no literary masterpiece, even though [they] devoted a paragraph to describing the peculiar stench of rotting mangroves." Hockney is the most fully rounded character, yet he seems to have been cut from corrugated cardboard; feelings—emotional and physical—are attached to him with cellophane tape. Events occur within the text mechanically, not organically; it is like a down-sized Rube Goldberg contraption. However, the sociopolitical aspect, or vector, is to the point. Hopefully, it will prove to be a bad prognostication. □

Blithe & Mean Spirits

Nathan Miller: *FDR: An Intimate History;* Doubleday; New York.

***Down & Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the "Forgotten Man";* Edited by Robert S. McElvaine; University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill.**

by Charles A. Moser

Any treatment of a major political leader who greatly influenced world history is bound to be interpretative through selection, and in an abstract sense Miller's study of Franklin Roosevelt is no exception to that rule. Still, the book is of a length appropriate to its topic (slightly over 500 pages), the material is on the whole sensibly chosen to strike a balance between the depiction of Roosevelt as a man and as a political leader, and Miller allows his own explicit predilections to intrude only infrequently, and then briefly. The book grows thinner from about 1936 on, with only some 100 pages devoted to Roosevelt's last decade; this strategy is understandable: Roosevelt's actions during that time caused such repercussions throughout the world that a thorough assessment of all of them is simply more than a biography should attempt.

FDR amounts to a standard biographical treatment, running from beginning to end, describing the private man behind the public man, but never outside the bounds of relative good taste. Miller never forgets that he should concentrate on Roosevelt's public actions, and not his personal foibles. And he provides sufficient material to enable us to answer certain questions about FDR which he himself does not address.

One of the most interesting such questions is: Which were the traits of Franklin Roosevelt's character that enabled him to become the supreme leader of one of the world's leading powers for an unprecedented length of time during the two most profound crises it has faced in this century—the Great Depression and the Second World War? Deep crises demand extraordinary leadership, and that Roosevelt, for all his faults, did in fact provide. In 1932 Walter Lippmann called him "a pleasant man who, without any important qualifications for the office, would like very much to be President," an evaluation with which many of those

Dr. Moser is professor of Slavic at the George Washington University in Washington, DC.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who knew FDR personally at the time would have agreed. How could such a man have proven to have within him the stuff of unusual leadership?

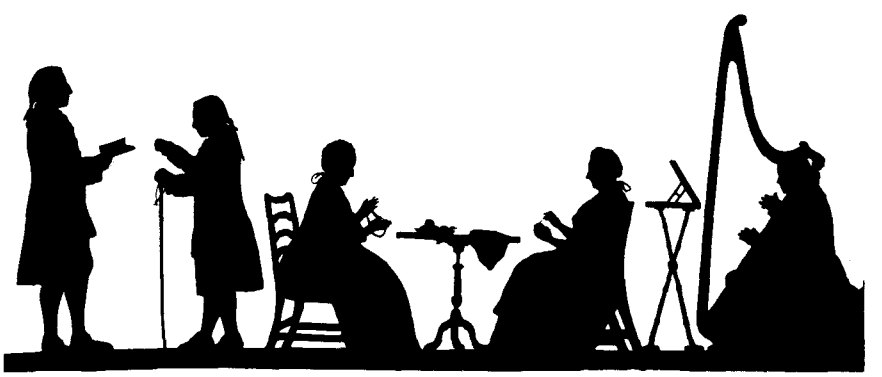
Part of the answer may be found in another's brief assessment of him, made shortly after he entered the White House in 1933. Breaking with tradition, Roosevelt called on the 92-year-old Oliver Wendell Holmes to seek his advice in handling the problems he confronted. Afterwards Holmes commented: "A second class intellect—but a first class temperament."

To be sure, Lippmann was correct in pointing to Roosevelt's ambition to be President: his family, in effect, laid claim to that office, and his early memories included recollections of visiting his Uncle Theodore in the White House (although Franklin quickly cracked the mold of family tradition by becoming a Democrat when he set out on his political career). He always found his greatest challenge in politics, rather than in the practice of law, for which he was trained. He early acquired an important political adviser in Louis Howe, who perceived Roosevelt's potential and, with an acute sense of political timing, helped FDR thread his way through the 1920's, a difficult decade for Democrats (much of Roosevelt's political deftness seemed to desert him after Howe's death in 1936). Roosevelt loyally served as his losing party's vice-presidential nominee in 1920, then began promoting Al Smith as early as 1924, and of course was behind him when he obtained the nomination in 1928. Most important, FDR moved promptly in 1932, when it was obvious that the era of Republican ascendancy had ended.

Still, although Roosevelt sought political power, mere ambition is not sufficient. Temperament—the ability to inspire confidence in others—must accompany it. Here Lippmann was blind to a reality that Holmes perceived. Roosevelt had the kind of buoyant self-confidence that a political leader needs at any time, but especially during a period of economic distress. His private battle with polio, which began in 1922, revealed unsuspected reserves of determination within him: his spirit proved unbreakable then as it would later, when Americans looked to him in their darkest hours. His buoyancy comes through in the book's epigraph, a sentence from a campaign speech of 1936, when an end to the Depression was still nowhere certainly in sight: "I still hold to the faith that a better civilization than any we have known is in store for America." Miller speaks of Roosevelt's "confident optimism" during the most terrible days of the war, when he saw it as his task to ensure that "the American people never wavered in their determination to fight through to victory." He was, as Frances Perkins put it, "a creative and energizing agent," one who imbued others with his temperament. He was always ready for bold experiments, though he knew not all could succeed, and dramatic gestures, as when he became the first presidential candidate to fly when he went to Chicago in 1932 to accept the Democratic nomination, or when he saw to it that his first Cabinet was confirmed by the Senate en bloc and met with him on the day of his inauguration.

But even those who seek chiefly to wield power—the overwhelming majority of officeholders—are compelled to *do* something with it if they acquire it. Roosevelt was independently wealthy, and he had little understanding of how a free-market economy works. To be sure, he displayed certain prejudices of a conservative sort, including a bias against excessive deficit spending and confidence in the institution of the military. But on the level of political philosophy, in the creative tension between liberty and security in Western civilization, his sympathies lay consistently with collectivism. In a political speech of 1912 setting forth some of his political views, one in which even Miller finds "totalitarian overtones," Roosevelt facilely equated liberty with "happiness and prosperity," and through this sleight of hand justified state intervention in every area of the economy, including the conservation of natural resources and food production: he foresaw, he said on that occasion, a time when "the state will compel every farmer to till his land or raise beef or horses," depending on the requirements of society as a whole.

When he accepted the presidential nomination in 1932, Roosevelt declared that the people wanted "work" and "security," and that these were, moreover, "spiritual values." When the Social Security system was being designed in 1934, Roosevelt mused to Frances Perkins that he didn't see why people should not be covered by social insurance "from the cradle to the grave." Social Security fell far short of that collectivist ideal, of course, but 50 years later we are beginning to comprehend the economic reasons why that relatively modest social-insurance scheme will not work, the sorts of economic reasons which Roosevelt could not fathom. That same lack of understanding led him to view the Tennessee Valley Authority, when it was launched, as a sort of competitive yardstick for private power producers.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This sentimentalized collectivist viewpoint was no doubt behind Roosevelt's insistence on choosing a man with even a more muddled mind, Henry Wallace, as his running mate in 1940. And in his State of the Union message for 1944 Roosevelt enunciated an Economic Bill of Rights which granted everyone a right to everything: job, food, clothing, recreation, a home, adequate medical care, education, a secure old age. Even the businessman, he said, had the right "to trade in the atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition," which probably meant price competition. Thus if Franklin Roosevelt had had his way in domestic policy, the United States would have moved to a totally socialized economy in the name of saving capitalism from itself.

Fortunately for us, however, FDR was too little of an intellectual to be an ideologue. Once when a journalist asked him about his "philosophy," Roosevelt—after denying that he was a communist, a socialist, or a capitalist—replied, somewhat puzzled: "I am a Christian and a Democrat—that's all." Though he had an instinctive predilection for collectivism, he also displayed a strong streak of American pragmatism which led him to experiment with anything that might work. But since he operated within the political system, which inherently tends toward collectivism, his experiments were usually collectivist. As for the people, they were simply pleased that he appeared to be "doing something," whether it worked or not.

Left to their own devices, most American Presidents ignore foreign policy, but foreign relations have a way of making themselves felt. Roosevelt was no isolationist: he traveled widely for his day and was quite cosmopolitan. But he had as much difficulty as most American Presidents do in distinguishing true friends from incorrigible enemies. His implacable hostility to the British Empire and his treatment of Charles de Gaulle illustrate his treatment of friends, while his attempts to curry favor with Stalin exemplify his illusions about his enemies. Miller tries to exculpate Roosevelt for his dealings with Stalin, maintaining that FDR was no "innocent" in foreign affairs, that he appreciated the importance of power relationships in the world. But Miller's argument is internally contradictory:

> Recognizing the reality of power as Woodrow Wilson never did, Roosevelt saw that international security had become primarily a police problem for the superpowers. The old European balance-of-power system was bankrupt, and he sought to guide the shift to a new world system in which the Soviet Union, along with the United States would be the arbiters of peace. Roosevelt failed—not through naiveté but because Stalin had different objectives.

Of course the contradiction is that it is the height of naiveté to negotiate with another leader on the assumption that he is interested in promoting international stability when in fact he is not, and when it is easy enough to learn from his own doctrinal statements that he is not. But then Roosevelt had no political "philosophy," and therefore could not comprehend a dictator who did.

* * *

In *The Possessed* (1871-72), that treasure trove of the modern mentality, Dostoevski's radical protagonist Pyotr Verkhovenski argues that "socialism among us spreads chiefly because of sentimentality." *Down & Out in the Great Depression* is partly the fruit of that mind-set, the sort that holds that since certain individuals in any society cannot care for themselves and charity compels us to assist them, and that since it is somehow "demeaning" to distinguish such individuals from the great majority who do support themselves, then it is incumbent upon government to attend to the welfare of all its citizens indiscriminately within the framework of a socialist welfare state. *Down & Out* also stems from the recent approach to history which reconstructs the experience of the common man rather than "historical figures" like FDR. This book, by the way, was published on the 50th anniversary of FDR's inauguration.

Down & Out is a compendium of letters preserved in various government archives and written by ordinary people during the 1930's, primarily over the course of Roosevelt's first term. The anonymity of the authors is preserved, but the letters themselves are reproduced with all their grammatical and orthographical warts, in the hope that they will provide an immediate grass-roots notion of what it was like to be at the economic bottom during the Depression. Most of them were sent to the central political figure of that troubled time, Franklin Roosevelt, but quite a few were addressed to Eleanor Roosevelt. There are also scattered letters dispatched to lesser political figures.

The editor has arranged the letters in 13 chapters and four subdivisions. The first subdivision contains letters written during the outbreak of the Depression under Hoover, and the last with positive and negative views of Franklin Roosevelt. The second and third subdivisions, containing 10 chapters and entitled "Conditions of Life in the Thirties" and "Reactions to the Depression," comprise the meat of the book: pathetic accounts of the lives of people out of work for months or years, facing eviction, without money to feed their children, without sufficient clothing, people at the brink of desperation who can think of nowhere else to

" 'Down and Out in the Great Depression' is an illuminating contribution to the history of a bad time half a century ago. But what a fortunate people, to have had a Government that responded to their miseries!"

—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.
New York Times Book Review

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turn except the White House. The flavor of these letters comes through, for example, in one written in 1935 by a Missouri woman to Mrs. Roosevelt asking for money to purchase eyeglasses for her son, who otherwise cannot attend school: "if I wasnt so poor I wouldnt ask you for a favor," she says. These letters in fact paint a touching if rather repetitive picture of those who suffered during the Great Depression.

But the writers of these letters also display, at best, a stifling narrowness of concentration upon their own problems, and at worst some quite ugly manifestations of the human spirit, such as rank envy. Some letters contain virtual denunciations of individuals or of social classes, including the Jews, and one can easily imagine their authors, had they lived in the Soviet Union rather than the United States, penning political denunciations of their enemies for personal gain. These letters make it clear that adversity by no means always ennobles the spirit. But they also make plain the difficulties of writing history through the eyes of the ordinary man who sees no further than his own doorstep, rather than through those of the extraordinary man like Franklin Roosevelt, who, for all his shortcomings, gives us a vision of what the human spirit can accomplish in the face of enormous and difficult challenges. □

Junior Giants

Edmund Wilson: *The Forties;* Edited by Leon Edel; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Frederic Prokosch: *Voices: A Memoir;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

The Forties, edited by Leon Edel, is the third volume of Edmund Wilson's notebooks to be published. While *The Twenties* and *The Thirties* are not as valuable as some critics thought, *The Forties* is clearly the weakest of the three. It is a wholly posthumous book without benefit of Wilson's editing. Almost everything in it can be found in finished form (better, more authoritative) elsewhere. It would be an onerous task to find an instance of an unrefined observation being superior to the fully considered thought formally published. Further, since Wilson was not a successful creative artist, we are not interested in the way his imagination turned the crude notes into artistic constructs. Those who think of Wilson as the major critic of his lifetime will justify this publishing overkill. Since I do not share that opinion of his achievement, this volume provides me with an opportunity for a brief retrospective with some demurrers.

It was during the 1940's, a period of transition for Wilson, that the impulse first seen whole in *To The Finland Station* came to the fore and began to dominate his mind and imagination. His second career as a writer started to develop fully. Until about 1945 literary criticism was his major activity. He was deeply interested in literature, bookish almost to a fault. While he was more intelligent and more forceful than Van Wyck Brooks, and much more interested in his contemporaries than was Brooks, the two were much alike in critical method. While Wilson was not interested in any aspect of philosophical criticism, if he had an approach, it was the one he learned from Christian Gauss and Hippolyte Taine and saw manifested in Brooks. Literary criticism was concerned with "a history of man's ideas and imaginings in the setting of the conditions which have shaped them." Wilson's powerful critical mind, however, was severely limited by his secular bias. He had no theology. "I think we have got to learn to get along without religion." And "The word *God* is now archaic and ought to be dropped by those who do not need it for moral support." The consequence of this dogma is that he gave no significance to the mysterious and the transcendent. For one interested in literature, nothing is more crippling. If the very nature of literature is to be discovered in the difference between the way things seem to be and the way they really are, one must always go beneath the surface to discover what Wilson would dismiss as the mystic or the mysterious. To doubt the significant meaning of that contrast is to come face to face to what happened to the Protestant mind when it lost its sense of the religious. For practical examples of Wilson's failure, one need remember only how badly he went wrong in his discussions of Fitzgerald, Dostoevski, Wilder, Waugh, and Dante.

There is a moral sensibility in Wilson, but of what kind is not clear. The crucial relationship between men and women is wholly naturalistic in Wilson's view of things. The embarrassing clinical notes from his own mechanistic sexual adventures recorded in the diaries are nothing but exploitative. They appear to be verbal safeguards, brutally recorded, to keep him from thinking that there is any other dimension to the relations between man and woman. On a more social level, he did not appear to scruple over the fact that his failure to pay his income tax for many years increased that burden on his neighbors. He had almost no sense of patriotism. His most successful critical essays are those about fiction, since a good deal of fiction lends itself to his sec-

"Wilson is close to being the archetypal unreconstructed American . . . . model democrat . . . valuable exemplar of a mind."

—Paul Fussell
The New Republic

Dr. Schwartz is with the English department at Marquette University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ularist approach more readily than does poetry and drama, both of which he seems to have missed almost altogether.

His second career is more difficult to assess. Some feel that *Patriotic Gore* is his greatest work, but only time will tell if his methodology is of any value. *To the Finland Station* was dated before it was published. *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* no longer has the stature it was prematurely given upon publication. *The Cold War and the Income Tax* is at best a curiosity. And what now can be said for *Europe Without Baedeker* and *O Canada?* It would be ironic if the passing of time were less kind to Wilson than to Van Wyck Brooks. Brooks, with less native ability, had at least a grand plan around which his books were organized. Wilson simply followed his nose; he was dominated by passing, personal whims. Things acquired significance by Wilsonian fiat. Personal hobbyhorses litter the landscape of his career from the 1950's on. Of course, it is precisely for what I see as a fault that he was judged to be a great success. Since he was himself the gauge of the significance of things, there was no need for objective confirmation of the importance of what interested him. For example, that he didn't pay his income tax became a national event because he willed it so. He measured the real by himself rather than the other way around.

In the 20's and 30's Wilson's professional liberalism was typical of that which dominated culture in the United States. The posthumously collected and titled *Letters on Literature and Politics* notwithstanding, I have the impression that he was a dilettante when it came to politics. How much importance is one to give his comment urging writers to "take Communism away from the communists and apply it to American conditions"? Wilson treated World War II as little more than an intrusion into his private space. His visit to Europe in the 40's generated no political wisdom of lasting value. "I have derived a good deal more benefit ... from the American bathroom than ... the cathedrals of Europe." A personal political cynicism made him discount the left in the 50's and thereafter: "Marxism is the opium of the intellectuals." The former Sovietophile learned to hate the bigness and bureaucracy of a central government because it demanded that he pay an income tax. It was personal pique generated by this experience that caused him to write to Dos Passos, "The Americans at the present time [1963] are being tyrannized over by the federal government in a way that ought to give them more cause for complaint than the colonists had for the Crown." Like a disillusioned Mercutio, and for much the same reason, he pronounced a plague on the houses of both the Soviet Union and the United States, and talked of becoming a Canadian citizen. His increasing bitterness was not the result of a serious reshaping of his thought or philosophical speculation. His crude pessimism was personal. "No clear line can be drawn between man and the other animals."

Wilson's is one of the many voices Frederick Prokosch records in his memoir, *Voices.* First he presents Alberto Moravia's description of him: "You must remember that Edmund Wilson is a *vulgarisateur* ... I don't refer to what one means by vulgarity. I mean that he writes for the fashionable populace. Not the low level of population but the middle level of populace, the ones who are eager to be *au courant.* Edmund Wilson is by no means vulgar but he speaks to a certain mediocre populace." Prokosch's actual meeting with Wilson came at a reception for the Sitwells, much bigger game for our literary lepidopterist. Wilson "has a petulant fat face with a high, looming forehead and a babylike expression of benevolent implacability." He dropped a boiled shrimp on Edith Sitwell's coiffure and stared at it with "scrupulous curiosity" while they discussed the incantatory element in poetry.

Prokosch is the kind of writer who fell between the literary cracks. Now 75 years old and living in the south of France, he has written 16 novels and four volumes of poetry. His first novel, *The Asiatics,* published in 1935, was hailed by André Gide, Thomas Mann, and Albert Camus. Yeats praised his early poetry. But he won no standing in the world of criticism, not even among those who write for the middle level of the population that wishes to be au courant. For those who want to read more of his work after looking at *Voices,* it should be noted that the style of the novels is a good deal better than the style of the memoir. The poetry is Americanized Walter de la Mare. Prokosch the novelist is a combination of Rafael Sabatini and Paul Bowles; the style can be characterized as exotic/erotic. Prokosch himself best describes the style of *Voices.* "I hid behind ... the mask of a naïf ... and I finally turned my shyness into a crafty sort of audacity." It is the would-be naïf who produces an overwrought, cloying, coy style which tends to discredit the veracity of the persona. When Robert Frost's hat is blown by the wind, he looks "frantic" and "disheveled," "almost hysterical for a white-hot instant." The wind "screams insanely," and the boughs of a tree "squeal like wounded cats." At Cambridge "I sniffed at the air, probing for the music of *Il Penseroso.* Then I strained my ears to catch a fleeting echo of *Childe Harold.*" His Lincoln Continental was his "beloved

"I know of few memoirs more hilariously readable than *Voices* .... it is fun when read in the proper spirit."

—John Simon
The New Republic

"[T]he memoir that [Prokosch] has written is curiously selfless."

—Gore Vidal
New York Review of Books

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

companion, and as it gradually grew decrepit I listened to its tremors with a desolated tenderness, even with tears in my eyes." When he attempted to simplify his style, he was distressed to find that "The threat of the *faux naif* loomed over the pages like a leer." No reviewer could provide a more accurate description of the tone of *Voices*.

This memoir should have been entitled *Name-Dropping*. (Compare *Voices: A Life of Frank O'Connor*, also 1983, by James Matthews for a sense of the sharp difference.) The index, for instance, is not a conventional one, but an "Index of Names." The names of his father, mother, and brother are not in the index. Modesty, perhaps. But the name of his beloved Latin teacher, Miss Reid, and the names of the four professors who left a deep impression on him are also missing, as are the names of Miss Maddison, Mrs. Marsh, Col. Burkhart, and others. Only the names of the famous he met or refers to are in the very revealing "Index of Names," Prokosch's personal *Almanach de Gotha*. *Voices* is not an autobiographical memoir in the usual sense; the secret of Prokosch is not to be discovered in any direct way in this book. He mentions that his life has been a desperate search for love, but all we learn at the end is that his friend, Jack, "a saint," is in England. "I looked for ultimate meanings" is another false lead. If he did, the search is not included in this book. The organizing principle of *Voices* is simply a record of the compulsion that drives him to meet the great. As a child he meets Anna Pavlova and Thomas Mann. In Paris it is Gertrude Stein and James Joyce. During college he meets Thomas Wolfe, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Robert Frost, and Wallace Stevens. At Cambridge University it's A. E. Houseman, Walter de la Mare, and E. M. Forster. Later in Europe, T. S. Eliot, Somerset Maugham, Virginia Wolfe—and so on. Curiously enough, he does not see himself in the category of the exalted. (Or does he, and is he paying back all those who did not agree with him?) He poses as the meticulous reporter of meetings, some so presented as to seem fictionally contrived.

What is striking from the very beginning is Prokosch's fantastic memory. The conversations are in quotation marks; every word is carefully remembered. And the great person always speaks as if he wishes to be quoted in further studies of him. The method must also puzzle Prokosch, who "explains" it at least 15 times. "After he left I went to my bedroom and wrote it all down, and this was the first of the dialogues that I scribbled faithfully in my notebooks." He developed "an eerie knack of remembering dialogues, imprinting them on my consciousness." However, that knack must have failed him because he refers later to transcribing dialogues while meeting with the speaker. E. M. Forster to Prokosch: "Must you write all this down? It seems rather brutal to write the whole thing down." André Gide to Prokosch: "Are you writing all this down? Is that an American habit?" Prokosch to Bernard Berenson: "I said shyly, 'Do you mind if I write this down, Mr. Berenson?' " Yet on another occasion Prokosch, less in conscious control, transcribes with "trancelike accuracy." But at the end of *Voices* he owns up to the secret we should have guessed all along. "I suffer from a malady which is called 'total recall.' I remember every visual and olfactory detail of an encounter, and the vocal intonations still keep ringing in my ears. But even worse, I hear silences, the inaudible reverberations." And there, as Henry James would say, you have it.

> I had several different motives for writing down these little dialogues: first, to develop a certain skill in capturing nuances of a conversation; second, to preserve a memento of what the great men had said; and third, to perform a kind of ritual, to tuck

LIBERAL CULTURE

All Together Now

A recent issue of *The New Republic* offers readers two articles on the AIDS epidemic. One, written by an expert on immunology, matter-of-factly explains that "one of the main reasons it became a public health problem was the promiscuity of many gay men." According to clinical studies of the victims, "Many had hundreds of sex partners a year, and some had had more than a thousand." In the other article, a "compassionate" liberal commentator named John McQuaid expresses first his fervent hope that after the public becomes informed about homosexual practices "puritanical attitudes may give way to the nonchalance that has increasingly characterized sexual mores in general" and second his delight that "the sense of shared vulnerability in gay communities has brought about a real pulling together." Listed on *TNR's* masthead as a reporter, Mr. McQuaid evidently has no medical credentials for writing on

the disease, which may explain why his pathology is backwards: obviously shared vulnerability is the gay community's legacy because they were *already* pulling together—800, 900, or 1,000 times a year. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> away a living fragment, to hide away a human relic, like the fingernail of a saint.

That explanation seems to fit Prokosch's description of his journey through life as a search for the "artist as a hero, as an enigma, as a martyr, and finally as a fragment of humanity." I remain dubious, however, about his description of the enterprise. William H. Pritchard was much more accurate when he described this book as "a modest talent cutting down his betters." When measured by Prokosch, the "great" are not nearly so great as one would think. They reveal themselves in ways so contrived by Prokosch that he can end up patronizing them. Bill Tilden is his hero, but he sees Tilden losing the Davis Cup. Thomas Wolfe with his "damp, bulging face" loses his battle with a pair of chopsticks. There is something "faintly sinister" about the countenance of Wallace Stevens. "A lonely and carnivorous little Forster" lurks behind the public E. M. Forster. Ernest Hemingway has a sheen of "carnivorous stupidity." Walter Gieseking is "lost and pathetic." Prokosch senses "a sinister vacuum behind the curtain" of Ezra Pound, "the crazy magician." Terribly insecure about having won the Nobel Prize, Sinclair Lewis slides "into the bathroom with a heartbroken gurgle." He suddenly fell in love with Dylan Thomas, "with his bulging potbelly, his pathos and pimples and his look of humiliation." Bernard Berenson's "small porcelain face looked very lonely and derelict." Vladimir Nabokov is "a lonely and sad and disillusioned lepidopterist." W. H. Auden proves to be the most troublesome. Apparently, Prokosch admired him more than the others and felt the most pain at having been excluded from his circle. Three times he tries to put him down, but with little success, settling finally for such a crude description as "his massive drunken misery" on his "desolate journey downward." It appears that many old scores are settled in these contrived meetings. None seem to have attained the tranquil joy in old age that Prokosch has. "My voyage is at its end. I think how glorious to grow old." He gets to be king of the hill, at last.

Prokosch was an enthusiastic lepidopterist. Near the end of *Voices* he refers to that hobby in what I take to be a graphic description of the method and purpose of *Voices*. The resonances are too perfect to pass by.

> I had accumulated thousands of little white envelopes, and in each envelope lay a butterfly. . . . On each envelope was written the name of the species and the place of capture. One by one I laid these specimens on the dampened sand in a relaxing box and two days later they'd be ready to spread on boards. This I did with infinite care, piercing the thorax with a pin and opening the wings into immaculate symmetry. . . . I pinned the butterflies into the cases with a hierarchical exactitude.

The collection is now large enough, he judges. "I decided that day never to kill another butterfly." Amen. □

Preaching and Probing

Zoë Fairbairns: *Stand We At Last;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl: *Vigil;* Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

by Dennis Q. McInerny

Jacques Maritain, besides being one of the most important philosophers of modern times, generally speaking, is worthy of being singled out for special praise for the contributions he made to the philosophy of art. Unlike those many philosophers who are part of the still-dominant analytical school of thought, for whom art is for the most part a peripheral matter, Maritain looked upon art as something essential to the human experience. Good Aristotelian and Thomist that he was, Maritain opted for the golden mean. On the one hand, he rejected the notion that art constituted a world unto itself, completely cut off from and independent of the larger world of everyday affairs. On the other hand, he rejected as well the Marxian notion of art, which has it that art is not in any way autonomous and must at every turn serve the ends of the state.

In treating the relationship between the artist and his work, Maritain showed himself to be especially loyal to the aesthetic thought of Aristotle, not out of a spirit of intellectual slavishness, but because he was capable of appreciating the fact that Aristotle's ideas were intrinsically sound, resilient, and as applicable today as when they were first formulated. One of the most basic problems the aesthetic philosopher, and after him the critic, must solve is best expressed in this question: Why does a particular work of art succeed—or fail to succeed? For Maritain, as for Aristotle, the sine qua non for success in artistic activity is that the primary end of that activity must always be the work of art itself. The artist must be a single-minded human being. If the artist is a literary artist, say a novelist, then the number-one item on his agenda must be to create the best novel he possibly can. To the extent that the artist keeps his attention focused on that end, the work will prove successful.

Conversely, the failure of artistic endeavor is explained by the fact that the artist allows himself, for one reason or another, to be distracted from the proper end of art. By way of expanding upon Aristotle's thought on this matter, Maritain developed the notion of *thèse*, which can be translated reliably enough as "thesis." A *thèse* is something that intrudes upon artistic activity, which either prohibits the concentration of the artist

Dr. McInerny is associate professor of English at Bradley University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

initially or disrupts it along the way, and which therefore virtually guarantees that the projected work of art will fail. Let us consider the case of the novelist again. Ideally speaking, a novelist, at any point during the long, arduous process of writing a novel, is engaged in his literary labors for the sake of the novel. He is writing a novel for its own sake. It might be helpful to be reminded here of Emerson's dictum that "Beauty is its own excuse for being." The point is that the writer is not writing a novel *for* something. Were he to do so, were he, for example, to sit down to write a novel for the purpose of persuading people of the superiority of socialism, or of the injustices of the Argentinian judicial system, or of the intellectual and moral flabbiness of American higher education, or were he to write with any number of other purposes primarily in mind, the book might very well be full of verve, an effective piece of polemical prose, but as a novel it would be a flop; it would fail because of the *thèse.* The *thèse* debilitates the creative process. It explains the presence of didacticism in literature.

It is important that we understand what Maritain is *not* saying on this subject. He does not imply that there is something that we might want to designate as the "pure novel," an aseptic, contentless entity whose virtues are to be explained in terms of formal criteria only, as if we were dealing with some kind of Platonic reality. Neither, on a different level, does Maritain suppose that the novelist is one who, unlike other human beings, has no ideas or passions concerning such subjects as education, practical justice, economics, philosophy, or religion. The novelist is in fact like other people in that he is possessed of many ideas and passions, but what sets him apart, what identifies him as a successful novelist, is precisely his ability to subordinate those ideas and passions, when he is involved in artistic activity, to the proper end of that activity. Everything becomes secondary to his need to create a good novel. Keeping one's priorities in order in this respect is not an easy thing to do, and literary history provides us with ample evidence that many a would-be successful novel has had its success thwarted because of the operation of a *thèse.*

Zoë Fairbairns's *Stand We At Last* is such a novel. It is an ambitious work in many ways, for the large span of time it attempts to cover, for the number of characters it deals with, and for the various national cultures it portrays. It becomes overly enterprising in its attempt to incorporate a *thèse* within its pages. Fairbairns sets out not simply to tell a story, but to tell a story with a *point.* Taken in itself, this need not necessarily be counterproductive. If literature did not contain moral import, it would have no interest for us; Allen Tate was correct when he remarked that every work of art, to be worth its salt, must harbor a "moral." But this moral must be fully integrated within the work of art. This means, in the case of a novel, that the moral must be embedded within the story; it must not take precedence over the story. But Fairbairns's novel is written for the sake of the moral, or, more precisely, to demonstrate an ideological point of view. This procedure can lead to literary success for an essay, a tract, a book-length history; it is the kiss of death for a work of fiction. The presence of the *thèse* is particularly evident toward the end of *Stand We At Last,* where the control Fairbairns exercised in the earlier parts of this 600-page book is lost and the polemics become a bit heavy-handed. The characters become just too perfect to be real in the pristine, by-the-numbers way they exemplify the ideals of the true feminist spirit.

Fairbairns could have done worse. She is involved in the women's movement. It would seem that her commitment to this movement is such that she is either unwilling, or unable, to subordinate it to the demands of art. But to read this novel, though it is wearisome in the preachy passages, is, on the whole, a pleasurable experience—Fairbairns is a good writer, a good storyteller. Her characters are three-dimensional (with the previously mentioned exceptions); they have flesh on their bones and warm blood pulses through their veins. *Stand We At Last* reinforces the unpatriotic opinion that perhaps the average British writer has surer mastery of his craft than the average American writer.

For all its formal strengths, then, *Stand We At Last,* as a novel, falls. Even if one considers it as a polemical work, taking its contents at face value, it is unpersuading. To the extent that the lives of the women depicted in the book are intended to demonstrate progress and the resultant benefits to civilization, Fairbairns's argument fails to convince. To her, it seems, the essence of freedom for human beings, women or men, is that they be so completely unencumbered that they are able to mess up their lives in whatever manner they wish.

Toward the end of the book, a character writes a note to her mother:

> Dear Mummy,
>
> Thank you for writing to tell me about the abortion. Of course I'm not shocked! I'm sure if the doctor said it was the right thing to do, then it was, and I hope you'll feel better soon. Keep taking the tablets!
>
> Love,
> Jackie

The logic of this reasoning, the quality of such moral consciousness as revealed by the casual attitude toward the subject of the note, provide not a little food for thought. We are expected to believe that this attitude toward abortion represents some kind of progress, for women, for humankind. This is not the case. Supposedly, the woman's consciousness has been raised. In fact, it has been lowered, to the level of the nazi. Like the nazi, she sees killing as a solution to human problems. Her concerns for the "quality of life" are of the charnel-house variety.

Vigil by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl is a radically different book from *Stand We At Last.* First of all, and most importantly, it is a bona fide novel. Young-Bruehl is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Give your favorite NON-LIBERAL a gift subscription to your favorite NON-LIBERAL journal of opinion.

Aha! The perfect gift for that friend who shares your outlook—and ought to be enjoying CHRONICLES OF CULTURE.

Here's your chance to provide a gift that engages, enrages, challenges, piques, posits, reviews, critiques, essays and observes—in a decidedly non-liberal manner.

The perfect match: your friend and the next 12 monthly issues of CHRONICLES OF CULTURE.

And we've made it easy. Simply send the coupon below, with your check for $18 (just $15 for the second gift subscription, $14 for the third). We'll not only start sending CHRONICLES OF CULTURE to your fortunate non-liberal friends, but alert them in advance that the subscription is on its way—as your gift from one non-liberal to another!

Chronicles of Culture

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION REQUEST

Please send a one-year, 12-issue subscription—and a card announcing my gift—to the non-liberal recipients listed below.

My check is enclosed for: Check One

$18 - one gift subscription ( )
$33 - two gift subscriptions ( )
$47 - three gift subscriptions ( )

First Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Second Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Third Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Gift Card to read:

From _____
(your name)

Send check and this request to:
Chronicles of Culture
934 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

NCCGR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better artist than is Fairbairns. There is something unmistakably Southern about this novel, in the intense concern it shows for place, for family, for tradition, for the problem of trying to come to terms with one's identity in relation to the past. Also Southern is the intricacy of its narrative, in which one can see Faulkner's influence. Young-Bruehl is a masterful writer, and the praise she has drawn is well deserved. Her style is rich and concentrated. She must be read slowly to be fully appreciated.

The ending of the novel is reminiscent of the ending of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms;* thus, *Vigil* seems very much within another tradition. The last glimpse we get of Hemingway's Frederick Henry he is in the immediate aftermath of the deaths of his child and his wife, walking away from the hospital through the night rain, alone, stunned, trying to come to grips with a despair which he lacks the moral wherewithal to overcome. At the end of *Vigil,* the narrator finds herself in comparable circumstances. She is left to cope with the suicide death of a young woman whom, after several fits and starts, she felt she was just coming to know and beginning to love. Here we have two novels written many years apart, but each reflecting a theme which has been almost a commonplace of American fiction since the post-World War I period: young life extinguished, the frustration of love and promise. It is a theme which points to a people who, for better than six decades now, have been running low on hope.

Precisely because *Vigil* is a successful work of fiction, what it has to tell us about ourselves, about our culture, is just that much more emphatic. The novel is about three women, the elder Elisabeth Maupin, who succeeds in coming to terms with her past and survives, her niece, who bears the same name but does not succeed in coming to terms with her past and does not survive, and the narrator, who is interestingly ambivalent. She seems to be neither as firmly grounded as the elder Elisabeth nor as rootless as the younger; her very ambivalence may bring with it its own dangers. Little Elisabeth, as the younger woman is called, is in many respects typical of her times, of our times. She is intelligent but shallow; she is sensitive, but indiscriminately so; she is sophisticated but studied in her dealings with others. She is obsessively preoccupied with self. She is utterly lacking in wisdom and does not have the slightest idea of the ways in which it might be pursued. One of the ironies of her predicament is that her relentless self-scrutiny is, in the final analysis, to no avail. Following the Delphic admonition to Know Thyself is beneficial, it seems, only if there is a self which is substantive, that is, which is worth knowing. But Little Elisabeth is a vacuous person; though she is impressively well-spoken, she has nothing to say.

At first glance, the position of the narrator would seem to be a safe one; that is, she appears to have a fairly firm grasp on reality. But a closer look shows this not to be the case. The narrator, in fact, is rather precariously balanced, liable at any moment to topple into the abyss, because reality for her is constituted almost completely in terms of language. This is not so with the elder Elisabeth, who lives very much within the world of language—writing for her is a way of *realizing* experiences—but for whom language is not *the* world. She is also capable of moving outside the world of language and touching real people, and this capacity in great part explains the peculiar kind of salvation she attains. The narrator, like the two Elisabeths, is an intrepid examiner of life. But to what purpose does she examine life? She does so only to be able to say in the end, carefully, in a precisely qualified manner, with a kind of Jamesian completeness and at times not without a kind of Jamesian fulsomeness, that there is not much there, that life, if not exactly meaningless, is ultimately reducible to words, words whose meanings are uncertain. The narrator has a marvelous way with words, but she seems to be dealing with language as a self-enclosed world, as if words themselves were the total reality. One has the impression that the symbolic potential of words is something which she believes a speaker can choose not to take into account. The narrator and Little Elisabeth have in common the fact that they speak profoundly, but about the surfaces of things only. This gives the illusion that they have actually penetrated the surfaces and are digging deep. In truth, they are frightened to death of what lies beneath the surfaces. They talk to be heard, not to be listened to. Language for them is not a means of getting to the heart of the real but of keeping the real at arm's length. □

Philosophical Sleight of Hand

Leonard Peikoff: *The Ominous Parallels: The End of Freedom in America;* Stein & Day; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

That a medium of language exists between us and external reality is not generally recognized. Yet once we recognize that the genius of our mental capacity is precisely the fact that our linguistic representations of reality are never exact replications of what's actually out there, we can entertain a more complete notion of why experimental or empirical approaches to existence are potentially of such power.

When we persist in believing or acting as though our words precisely match reality, rather than being some ongoing approximation, we become prisoners of that reality. The reason is this: invention and change, transformation and progress are all a result of man's ability to alter his

Dr. Pradl is with the department of communication arts and sciences at New York University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

linguistic representations of the world and thus make the world different from what it was previously. This should not be surprising. Still, most people continue to believe that language merely provides a way of transcribing reality, not of constructing it. When societies act as though "transcription" were true, they become static and new innovations or technologies for both the physical and behavioral spheres of existence are impossible.

The discrepancy between language and reality is the paramount recognition of Western civilization, one which makes possible our dynamic way of life. But there is a high cost we must pay for this discrepancy and the individual freedom that it fosters: insecurity, or a lack of certainty, as Dewey would describe it. When the locus of control is external to the individual, he knows his place. He may be less free, but he suffers no anxiety about predicting events. Security reigns, even when people are not happy with their circumstances. Indeed, people will persist with something intolerable simply because they feel certain about how events will transpire: we have all met persons who have invested in their own impotency.

Yet many in the West live knowing that the representations of reality that they perceive are simply their own and thus subject to alteration, and so they try to improve their condition. In America this restless energy has seemingly known no bounds. And so infinite experiments that needed fresh language even to describe them have led to wondrous new forms and expanded liberties. Yet simultaneously came heavy responsibilities and an ever-widening gap between reach and grasp, between imagination and reason.

Reason is finally what allowed man to perceive the discrepancy between language and reality; this discrepancy is but another name for freedom. Citizens are free when they have choice, ownership, and liability. While reason fosters these conditions, it paradoxically generates a counter urge for submissive control. In fact, we might say that every age of reason contains within it all-too-fertile seeds for subsequent crops of irrationality. Just when man makes significant gains through the freedom manifest by his reason, he feels the need to consolidate these gains and so turns in on himself and in a fit of paralysis snuffs out the flame of reason.

Leonard Peikoff's excursion, *The Ominous Parallels: The End of Freedom in America,* is rightfully understood in the context of the contradictory tensions released by the powers of reason. Ostensibly about the philosophical conditions that gave rise to Hitler's Germany, the book really uses its analysis to hammer home dogmatically the message that America is on a similar road to evil and disaster. Peikoff's descriptive thesis runs smoothly: "To liberate humanity from intelligence, Hitler counted on the doctrines of *irrationalism.* To rid men of conscience, he counted on the morality of *altruism.* To free the world of freedom, he counted on the idea of *collectivism."* In other words, ideas govern men's actions, and so Hitler was able to exploit the long-standing tradition of German idealism for his own sinister purposes. Tracing a line from Plato to Kant to Hegel, Peikoff seeks to establish the typology of the totalitarian regime and the psychological states that make it possible. The Third Reich as contrasted with our own experiment of 1776 suggests three contrasting polarities: idealism vs. reason, self-sacrifice vs. selfishness, and collectivism vs. egoism. In each case the tyranny of the left seeks to overwhelm the dynamic self-interests of the right. Thus when the necessary supporting ideas which allow force to triumph over reason are in the air—as they were in Germany during the period Peikoff examines—any atrocity is possible.

Peikoff devotes the majority of his presentation to demonstrating how the political and social structures and conventions of Germany inevitably paved the way for a Hitler. He provides much detailed and interesting information on subjects from the vulnerability of the Weimar Constitution, born as it was in the tradition of German militarism, to the psychic conditioning of the brownshirts, heirs to those roaming bands of vigilante soldiers and students ironically called the Free Corps. His chapter on the concentration camps is particularly forceful in clarifying how the system deliberately broke down the identity of prisoners by denying them any access to rational order. Human survival rests on some set of meanings which when tested are more or less confirmed; the prisoners had every normal social expectation undercut and so all values were inverted.

In characterizing the cultural climate of prenazi Germany, Peikoff sees villains under every stone working diligently to undermine individual autonomy and to consolidate bogus altruistic state centralism. Oswald Spengler, Richard Wagner, Arnold Schönberg, Vasily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Max Ernst, Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, Werner Heisenberg, and Kurt Godel all contributed to the "emotionalist republic" that destroyed the fragile connection between self-expression and external real-

In the Mail

***Problems & Prospects of Presidential Leadership in the Nineteen-Eighties, Volume II,* edited by James Sterling Young; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** The President and Congress encompassed in just 79 pages. Imagine.

***A History of the World's Great Religions* by Ward McAfee; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** To quote one: "Amen."

***The White House Press on the Presidency: News Management and Co-option* edited by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** News *co-option?* Could this be an attempt at clarity through obfuscation?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ity. Nihilism and the unleashing of hatred as the dominant responses to experience served to eliminate personal confidence in individual existence; not unexpectedly, Peikoff discovers Freud and his followers at the center of this antiperson, antivalue morass.

The half-truths that make such a view appealing must be faced squarely; however, Peikoff's credibility slips when he becomes swept up in his own rhetorical excesses which manhandle the subtle complexities of the events and the psychology that determine human behavior:

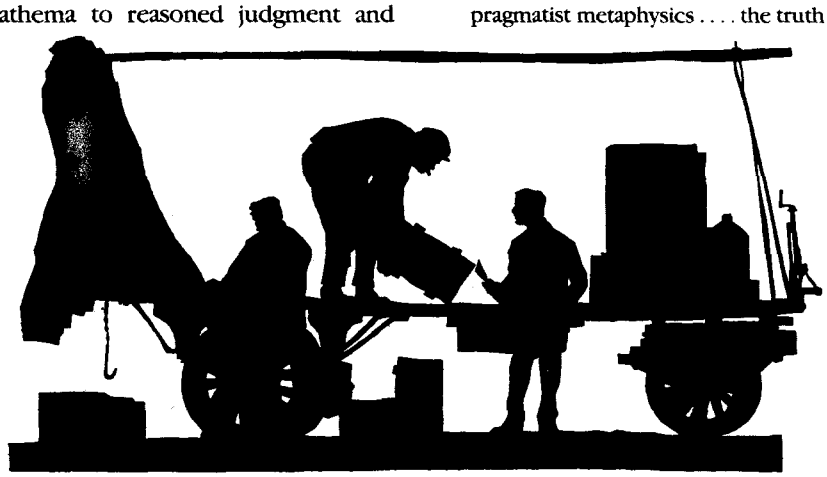
> Man's science, they say, requires the dismissal of values (Max Weber), his feelings require the dismissal of science (Heidegger), his society requires the dismissal of the individual (the Frankfurt Institute), his individuality requires liberation from logic (the Bauhaus)—logic is oppression, consistency is an illusion, causality is dated, free will is a myth, morality is a convention, self-esteem is immoral, heroism is laughable, individual achievement is nineteenth-century, personal ambition is selfish, freedom is antisocial, business is exploitation, wealth is swinish, health is pedestrian, happiness is superficial, sexual standards are hypocrisy, machine civilization is an obscenity, grammar is unfair, communication is impossible, law and order are boring, sanity is bourgeois, beauty is a lie, art is s[——].

Isn't such reverse sloganeering an anathema to reasoned judgment and presentation regardless of its galvanizing effect on certain readers?

What Peikoff fails to attend to adequately is the fine line between reason and loss of faith. Because it is two-edged, reason must be construed as a human power worthy of exaltation, not as a flaw which spells despair and leads to the kind of antilife "solutions" so well documented in the work of David Holbrook, especially in his *The Masks of Hate.* Peikoff, however, is insensitive to these subtle tensions surrounding the gift of reason and so he would polarize, rather than seek to synthesize, human intention. Alas, even in America, according to his view, we may already have slid over the brink.

We must, of course, resist the continual erosion of individual authority by the state, but Peikoff's assertion that such erosion is solely the result of philosophical idealism is at best suspect. And his assertion is based on rhetorical strategies that permit him to glibly attack American philosophers from Emerson to Dewey and to see pragmatism as the intellectual disease responsible for current welfare trends. The assassination of pragmatism is efficiency itself—guilt by association:

> [Kant and Hegel concluded that] the essence of mind, is not to be a perceiver of reality, but to be a *creator* of reality. This is the heart of German idealism, and this is the heart of the pragmatist metaphysics . . . . the truth of an idea, according to pragmatism, cannot be known in advance of action. The pragmatist does not expect to know, prior to taking an action, whether or not his 'plan' will work . . . . Aristotle, and the Enlightenment shaped by his philosophy, had held that reality exists prior to and independent of human thought—and that human thought precedes human action . . . . Pragmatism represents a total reversal of this progression . . . First, action—second, thought—third, reality.



Unfortunately, these concepts and their interrelationships are much more complex than Peikoff's slippery movement here would indicate.

Although Hegelian ideas have influenced American pragmatic philosophy, Peirce, James, Dewey and their followers were attempting a new synthesis of idealism and experimental empiricism. "Action to thought to reality" sounds impressive but is empty because the real issue is the relationship between knowledge and action in which thought is the ongoing dialectical mediator, both initiator and evaluator. We can't know reality in advance of some sort of test; however, the pragmatists hardly advocated a program of blind feeling action in isolation of reasoned prior expectations as Peikoff's characterizations imply.

Peikoff's analysis of America's "susceptibility" to German idealism might have been better served had he pondered, for instance, the experience of the immigrant John Roebling, reputedly one of Hegel's prized students. Coming to America to found a utopian agricultural community, the reality of the American experiment eventually took hold of his consciousness. The end result, the majestic Brooklyn Bridge, celebrates the vital connection between an aesthetic reflecting past traditions and a technology pointing to the genius of future engineering innovations. Such achievements give substance to the claim of America's destiny soaring beyond the limited imaginations of sinecured bureaucrats.

The clincher comes in the conclud-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing chapter when Peikoff finally presents us with the philosophical solution for America: Ayn Rand's "objectivism." Peikoff's remarks become aphoristic, as though they were the irrefutable wisdoms of some Eastern mystic. Logical contradictions thus need not be addressed. Although the central role in human affairs of ethics and values is properly acknowledged, Peikoff provides no program for discovering the origins of those ethics and values and for showing how they dynamically mediate the tension between the individual and the group. Selfishness and reason as necessary active processes are applauded and the discrepancy between immediate concrete perception and later abstract conception is recognized, but Peikoff never concerns himself with how one could possibly represent once and for all that absolute truth and reality to which he constantly refers.

All this does not mean that the book will not trigger a host of useful connections. The concepts Peikoff dashingly juggles must be dealt with by any conservative setting out to specify a moral conception of reality and existence. Still, it is important that we continue to recognize that our peculiar American landscape, however imperfect, can continue to resist tyranny as long as the various "knowledges" its reason releases do not cause the majority of us to lose faith in the original enterprise. As long as we remember the necessary balance between assertiveness and humility, we can live comfortably with reason. □

Of Poetry, Pseudo-Psychiatry, and Prophecy

Peter Medawar: *Pluto's Republic;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Arthur Janov: *Imprints: The Lifelong Effects of the Birth Experience;* Coward-McCann; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

At least since William Blake, most poets have been decidedly hostile to science. And with good reason: scientific paradigms expressed in flatly denotative formulae have greatly constricted the breadth of accepted reality, consequently deadening appreciation for the creative imagination. Indeed, when Charles Darwin confessed in his *Autobiography* that his own analytical habits had made him utterly incapable of enjoying Handel or Shakespeare, he anticipated a parallel observation made by I. A. Richards concerning the typical 20th-century reader. Poetry, warned Richards, is in serious trouble because moderns cannot respond emotionally to any "pseudostatements" repugnant to an empirical and mathematical Weltanschauung.

This antipoetic reduction of the culturally certified universe was hardly necessary. Sir Isaac Newton, the repeated target of Romantic scorn, was anything but a thoroughgoing empiricist. A fervent believer in Scripture, Newton abhorred the conception of the world as an autonomous machine. He supposed that angels superintended the movements of planets and metaphorically described gravity as the music of a divine Piper. Though Newton was himself not especially fond of poetry, his world view could have richly nourished a poetic sensibility. Unfortunately, post-Newtonian scientists have since used Occam's razor as a scalpel for severing the optic nerves of all eyes which see seraphs anywhere. Moreover, they have amputated all ears which hear the celestial strains: long before the cosmos was so termed, its investigators had thus become voluntarily *absurd* (from Latin *absurdus*, "deaf").

Although lacking much that Newton embraced, the modern scientific world view, with its attendant inability to bifurcate emotional and intellectual responses, is nevertheless the attenuated heritage of Judeo-Christianity. Unlike the deities of the East, the biblical God of the West is a jealous God. In the Old Testament, Joshua demanded that the people make an absolute choice between Yahweh and the pagan gods of Egypt, while in the New Testament, Jesus denied admittance to His strait and narrow way to any not willing to forsake, if necessary, even father, mother, and spouse for the Truth's sake. In the light of such exacting doctrines, the West developed an exclusive and self-consistent understanding of reality. In contrast, under the influence of religions which recognize as equal many different paths to nirvana, the Eastern nations developed eclectic philosophies, ignoring—often failing to apprehend—logical inconsistencies. The East therefore provided a most bountiful harvest of gods (India alone has tens of thousands), but wise men looking for Christ or science had to travel west.

Blake was not a wise man. Arguably a talented madman, he led the vanguard of poets who declared allegiance to "the Devil's party" and waged war against both Christian belief and scientific method. Like Milton's Devil, such poets sought to create their own "private systems of salvation" (Keats's phrase) rather than humbling themselves before religious doctrine or physical fact. They wanted their mysterious rainbows undisturbed by optical analysis and refused to subordinate the capricious spirits of Imagination to the angelic heralds of revelation. Unlike Milton, the Romantics failed to recognize that subjective affirmation is soon obscured in the gloomy chaos of nihilism or contorted into the serpentine coils of Blakean myth. In Blake's "four-fold vision," the scientist and the scriptorian are identified together as Urizen and cast into hellish underworld dens, while his

Mr. Christensen is assistant editor of Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"redeemed" inherit Beulah land, where all passionately held imaginative visions —even contrary ones—are equally true.

As one of the very few contemporary scientists who read Blake, Peter Medawar admires the beauty of Blake's verse, but detests the illogic and subjectivity of his epistemology. (For Urizen, beauty is not truth.) Himself a Nobel laureate in medicine, Dr. Medawar lucidly answers the antiscientific "literary propaganda of the Romantics" in the essays collected in *Pluto's Republic* by clarifying the nature of the scientific endeavor. Pure induction, advocated by Bacon (another of Blake's enemies), is a myth, he explains. Ideas simply do not inhere in facts themselves, no matter how numerous, nor is it ever possible to view bare facts, totally unmasked by the observer's preconceptions. Hence, Dr. Medawar points out, imagination is as essential to scientific inquiry as it is to poetry. A researcher always formulates his initial hypothesis in a manner which is "imaginative or logically unscripted." He then does everything he can to test the correspondence of that hypothesis to measurable reality, trying especially to contrive experiments which might disprove the hypothesis. If a single ugly fact contradicts the beautiful hypothesis, it must be discarded or modified. If a hypothesis does demonstrate predictive value and is not contradicted by any known evidence, it may then be accorded provisional faith as a "theory" or even "law," but absolute proof of its validity remains humanly impossible.

In Dr. Medawar's view, it is this tentativeness and this constant testing of imaginative construct against empirical evidence which distinguishes scientific discourse from poetic and which makes it fatuous to compound the two. Indeed, having rescued the scientist from the depths of Blake's cosmology, Dr. Medawar consigns to *his* "intellectual underworld," the Pluto's Republic of the title, those students of human affairs who try to pass off Beulah-land fantasizing as science. He especially indicts psychotherapists, not because their theories are highly imaginative, but because their "doctrines are so cunningly insulated from the salutary rigours of disbelief. Instead of subjecting their speculative paradigms to systematic testing, these pseudoscientists offer "a lava-flow of *ad-hoc* explanations pour[ing] over and around all difficulties." By claiming "a privileged access" to the psyche, they pretend to help the deranged "understand" their condition, while deprecating the importance of "the notion of *cure*."

It is hard to imagine a book which more fully illustrates the psychotherapeutic inanities Dr. Medawar discusses than Arthur Janov's *Imprints*. Dr. Janov (Ph.D., not M.D.) styles himself as a scientist, and occasionally even quotes from a medical journal or two, but his wildly speculative book is ludicrously unscientific. It proposes the simplistic notion that psychological abnormalities—even susceptibility to cancer, epilepsy, and suicide—derive from the trauma of being born, the "Primal Pain" imprinted deep in our subconscious and recoverable *only* through a special psychic "rebirthing" process developed by Dr. Janov and company. We may largely ignore the influence of bad families, child abuse, or incest, since the infallible Doctor has "seen every possible combination and permutation of mental illness" and has discovered that "birth and pre-birth trauma are prepotent over almost any later kind of trauma." Naturally, though Dr. Janov provides lengthy rebirthing transcripts from his patients and interprets them for the reader, he makes no effort to test the factual accuracy of these transcripts by systematically comparing them to actual medical records of the specific pregnancies and deliveries involved. And, of course, the treatment he advocates (done exclusively by therapists trained by his Primal Institute) is expensive and "involves months and years of therapy, and even then may not be totally effective." For the sake of unborn generations, Dr. Janov argues that the primitive "stoop-squat-deliver method" of childbirth would eliminate the Primal Pain and the resultant neuroses and cancer. ("It's that simple.") He offers no statistical evidence to support such a view, but then he was probably too busy collecting fees to collect data.

In answer to the many in the "psychological and psychiatric sciences" who he admits are skeptical about his theory, Dr. Janov avers that his concept "did not develop as a theory to be superimposed over reality, but rather evolved out of observation, and measurement of that reality." Here, in other words, we have the pretensions of the purely inductive method which Dr. Medawar demonstrates to be impossible. Here, too, we have the confusion of scientific and creative literature, for Dr. Janov elsewhere states that his theory harmonizes with images "found in poetry"—at least in the wretched doggerel written by his patients.

One of the dangers of such foolish mythologizing masquerading as science, Dr. Medawar warns, is that physical problems amenable to medical treatment may be neglected. There is another danger, though, that is ignored by both Dr. Janov and Dr. Medawar. Many "mental" problems are spiritual problems whose resolution can only be effected through repentance, love, and faith. Dr. Janov dismisses "religious conversion" as a spurious substitute for his therapy (Christianity has its own "rebirthing" process), while Dr. Medawar, having rescued the scientific half of Urizen, joins Blake in damning the religious half. This is most unfortunate, for the same Judeo-Christian heritage which made science possible in the first place could now give it the context of meaning and morality it often lacks.

Dr. Medawar does see the need for such a context: "Moral judgements," he writes, "should intrude into the execution and application of science at every level." What is to form the basis and ground for these moral judgments? Dr. Medawar is not at all clear on this issue. At one point he suggests that "a certain natural sense of the fitness of things, a feeling that is shared by most kind and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reasonable people," will be our guide. Precisely what "natural" sense does he have in mind? That which guides the very natural aborigines of Borneo or their counterparts in California communes? One suspects that instead he has in mind the very *un*natural sense inculcated by Judeo-Christian culture, but, if so, he is philosophically cheating. He is cheating, too, when he informs the reader that recognizing the "autonomous" world of all mental artifacts "does away with subjectivism" and yet on the facing page he discredits the meaning of one of those very artifacts (a fatalistic stanza from Fitzgerald) because it does not accord with "my own view."

How man ever acquired a moral sense at all is a question Dr. Medawar sophistically evades. Certainly, he does not recognize in man a unique ontological or spiritual status. Dr. Medawar sees only chemical determinism at work in man's origin and denies him any "privileged axis" in nature. With an equivocal analogy Dr. Medawar suggests that ethics differs from physics merely in the way that topology differs from Euclidean geometry, and to those who are dubious about the use of animal studies as a guide for human behavior he rejoins that we must remember that without such studies "there would be no penicillin, no insulin, no transplantation." Small wonder that he sees metaphysics as merely the "compost that can nourish the growth of scientific ideas."

The truth, which Dr. Medawar knows, is that science simply cannot yield moral or cognitive meaning, since "inferences having to do with the first and last things cannot be deduced from propositions containing only empirical furniture." Unfortunately, he repeatedly forgets this and pronounces as scientific fact his own irreligious opinions. Thus, for instance, he declares that a statistical survey calling into question the efficacy of prayer represents the only valid approach to the issue. Similarly, he finds that the existence of certain diseases should make "even the most devout question the existence of a benevolent deity" instead of reinforcing their consciousness of man's Fall. Especially proud that science has "liberated" man from the "superstition" of a Second Coming, he rejoices at the secular prospect of "a future in this world." (No evidence exists, of course, to disprove this Christian doctrine, and should the Son of man suddenly appear one day in clouds of glory as He promised, Dr. Medawar would doubtless advance a new and quite viable hypothesis: "Well, I'll be damned!")

But what has the vista of millennia without a Final Judgment actually inspired? What besides widespread ennui, drug abuse, random sex, and teenage suicide? Even Dr. Medawar concedes "the decay of values . . . in this modern world." Moreover, a universe operating only according to the principles thus far discovered by science is necessarily temporal and therefore does not allow anything—not mankind as a race, not the very galaxies—to avoid eventual extinction. Time without eternity, as T. S. Eliot perceived, ultimately offers but two things: "Dung and death." The Second Coming, a darkly threatening myth to Dr. Medawar, was (and still is for many) a belief which endows life with drama and meaning. And surely it is the craving for meaning which above all else afflicts modern man. As Dr. Medawar correctly observes, the popularity of Teilhard de Chardin's hysterical mysticism is "a symbol of hunger, a hunger for answers to questions of the kind that science does not profess to be able to answer." Despite all that scientists have done to enhance modern technology, medicine, and agriculture, they have not forestalled the fulfillment of the bleak prophecy of an ancient shepherd named Amos:

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Night School in New Jersey

An adult education program in New Jersey recently published a catalog of its course offerings. Included are such things as "The Gambler," which should not be confused with anything by Dostoevski. Its description opens: "On visits to Atlantic City, do you find yourself playing only the slot machines because you don't know the basic rules of the other games?" One of the more interesting offerings is the exclamatory "Living Single!" Its description advises harried housewives and sluggish salesmen that:

> Living alone CAN BE more acceptable and satisfying! But—you can also explore some current options for engaging in a successful relationship. There will be dialogue, discussions, and experiential techniques for recycling your lifestyle. Enrollment is limited to the first 25 males and 25 females! The class will meet at the Holiday Inn.

A note to the course description says that the graduates of the course will be invited to a "Let's Get Acquainted" session that will also be held at the before-mentioned motel.

It doesn't take a graduate from "The Gambler" to know that the odds are better than even that the a posteriori session will be redundant for a number of the 50 lifestyle recyclers, many of whom will have enrolled in the course that follows in the catalog: "The Law of Divorce & Marriage." □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Speak No Evil

Michael Straight: *After Long Silence;* W. W. Norton; New York.

by John E. Haynes

In *After Long Silence* Michael Straight reveals that he was a member of a communist cell and cooperated with a Soviet espionage network while working for the U.S. government. These revelations caused a brief stir in the media when Straight's memoir appeared because Straight's socially prominent family founded and owned *The New Republic,* and Straight edited the journal from 1948 until his family sold the magazine in 1956.

Straight explains that he joined a communist student cell at Cambridge University in the mid-1930's and was recruited to serve as a Soviet spy in America. He returned to the U.S. in 1937 and used his family connections to gain a position in the State Department. Subsequently, he moved to an office in the Interior Department where political speeches for the White House were prepared, and later returned to the State Department. Throughout this period Straight met secretly with a Russian who was his contact with Soviet intelligence. Straight asserts that he broke off the relationship in late 1941.

Straight says that when he became editor of *The New Republic* he was an opponent of communism and Soviet expansion, though he did not go to the authorities until 1963. (Even at that late date, his information led to uncovering at least two Soviet spys.) In the ideological civil war among American liberals that followed World War II, Straight, after some hesitation, sided with the anticommunist wing against the Popular Front faction gathered behind Henry Wallace. In his memoir, Straight is emphatic that under his leadership *The New Republic* was both liberal and anticommunist. However, an examination of *The New Republic's* coverage of the Whittaker Chambers-Alger Hiss affair during the period of Straight's editorship illustrates the limits of Straight's version of anticommunist liberalism.

In 1948 Chambers testified before House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that he had managed a ring of Soviet spies which included Alger Hiss, a former high official in the State Department and, at that time, the head of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. Hiss's denial of Chambers's testimony developed into a cause célèbre and led to Hiss's conviction for perjury.

Straight's experience with communism and Soviet espionage obviously gave him a special perspective on the case. Straight knew the falsity of the widely believed notions that a man of Hiss's blue-blooded background could never be a spy and that the claim of Soviet espionage networks in Washington was only the product of paranoid anticommunist hysteria. In addition to his knowledge of the context for the case, Straight also relates in *After Long Silence* that after Chambers's testimony he phoned Hiss to get his reaction. Recalling that conversation, Straight states, "I sensed then that Chambers was telling the truth, and that remote as America had been from the anguish of Europe, there had indeed been Soviet agents in high positions in our government."

In his memoir, Straight contrasts his attitude in *The New Republic* with that of *The Nation,* the chief rival for the position of spokesman for liberalism.

> The editors of *The Nation* were perfectly clear as to where they stood on the charges made by Elizabeth Bentley [who also testified regarding a communist spy ring in Washington] and Whittaker Chambers. 'Any neurotic exhibitionist who can claim to have been a Communist,' said *The Nation,* 'is now assured of absolution, soul-satisfying publicity and, probably, more material rewards.' My signed editorial in *The New Republic* was less palatable to most liberals. 'In general,' I wrote, 'we believe the outline of Elizabeth Bentley's story is largely accurate.'

Straight, however, quotes himself out of context. In the original the passage is immediately followed by the following comments:

> The Bentley testament, if true, indicates that the Russians may have got by espionage what the British and our other allies got by sitting at a table in meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and other inter-allied boards. The testimony of Chambers, if true, demonstrated that certain government officials in the early thirties exercised their constitutional rights to be simultaneously members of the government and members of the Communist Party. . . . All this has seemed to us self-evident for some time.

As Straight quotes his words in *After Long Silence,* the passage suggests that in *The New Republic* he affirmed Bentley's and Chambers's testimony. But in their proper context, the words lead to a deprecation of the significance of their testimony.

In the editorial, Straight also writes that when Hiss appeared before HUAC in response to Chambers, he "cleared himself in the eyes of most of the committee." Of those named by Chambers, Straight said: "many of these men we be-

> "[T]his memoir offers no serious evidence . . . . Straight has complained that he is not and never was a spy. I'm inclined to believe him . . . . the main result of his book is to strengthen the myths of the Cold War without adding new evidence."
>
> **—Victor Navasky**
> ***The Progressive***

Mr. Haynes is a legislative assistant in Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lieve to be innocent of the charges made against them." In the next issue a *New Republic* story entitled "Somebody is Lying" said that "it seems certain that either Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers were perjuring themselves on a monumental scale, or that this was true of many of those who they accused of being members of a Communist espionage system before and during the Second World War." *The New Republic* went on to report on the cases in a fashion which would lead most readers to conclude that *The New Republic* leaned to the view that Bentley and Chambers were more likely to have perjured themselves.

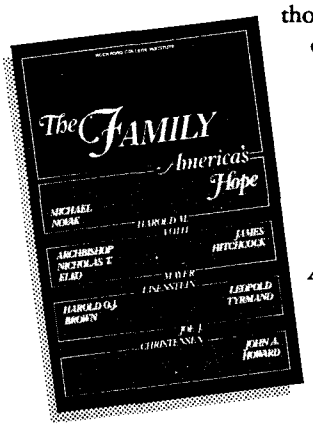
Later, when Hiss was tried for perjury, *The New Republic* summarized the case against Hiss as revolving around Chambers, the "chief and almost only witness against Hiss." This remark is odd, given the fact that although Chambers's testimony was central to the case against Hiss, a number of other witnesses testified who either supported Chambers's story or discredited Hiss's. The jury convicted Hiss, and *The New Republic's* immediate reaction was hostile, questioning "the judicial implications of conviction on the testimony of a confessed liar," referring to Chambers. One wonders how Straight could have written, or allowed to be written, such a contemptuous description of Chambers, considering Straight's own unconfessed secret.

The New Republic published its most extensive article on the Hiss case several weeks after the verdict. Authored by Merle Miller, the essay reviewed the entire case in a tone hostile to Chambers and sympathetic to Hiss. Miller charged that "the Government of the United States was spending tens of thousands of dollars trying to make a villain of Alger Hiss." But, wrote Miller, "Alger Hiss, even to the name, was cast for the role of hero." Miller also recounted Hiss's establishment background of a respectable Baltimore family, scholarship at Johns Hopkins, attendance at Harvard Law School, selection for the law review, friendship with Justice Felix Frankfurter, Supreme Court clerkship for Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and membership in a prestigious Boston law firm.

Miller stated that Hiss went on to employment in various government agencies because of a "felt urge for public service." Hiss "looked like a man of destiny," wrote Miller, and noted his "impeccable taste" in personal attire. Miller even observed that Alger's wife, Priscilla, possessed "a face that suggested breeding and a great deal of strength." In contrast to his admiring portrait of Hiss, Miller could hardly bear to look at Chambers, whom he described as "the sprawling, putty-faced Whittaker Chambers" and whom he referred to as "the one who had finally betrayed Alger Hiss." Miller summarized the testimony of the trial in a manner that makes it difficult to believe that a jury of decent-minded citizens could have convicted Hiss. Nonetheless,

"For intellectual and spiritual support and reinforcement, parents will want to read THE FAMILY: AMERICA'S HOPE.

. . . it will lift your spirits and strengthen your determination to fulfill the role you and God have undertaken together: that of being the best parents you can possibly be in spite of the designs of those who would destroy the foundation of Western civilization."
—*The Barbara M. Morris Report*



Speeches presented at a national conference by:

Michael Novak • James Hitchcock
Archbishop Nicholas T. Elko • Harold M. Voth
Mayer Eisenstein • Joe J. Christensen
Harold O.J. Brown • Leopold Tyrmand
John A. Howard

The FAMILY
America's Hope

Send check payable to:
The Rockford Institute
934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103

Order *THE FAMILY: AMERICA'S HOPE* today and we'll send you a bonus copy of Allan C. Carlson's "The Family in America, 1982."

☐ Payment enclosed ($4.00 plus 50¢ postage)
☐ Bill me

NORF1

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miller did not assert that Hiss was completely candid in his testimony and allowed that the physical evidence was difficult to explain.

The Hiss case was a major political controversy and the occasion for particularly bitter debates between anticommunist liberals and their Popular Front opponents. Although many liberals came to accept Hiss's guilt, a large segment of American liberalism insisted (and still insists) on Hiss's innocence. As editor of *The New Republic,* Straight was in a key position to contribute to a healthy debate on the Chambers-Hiss affair, and his knowledge of Soviet espionage gave him a special ability to interpret the controversy for his liberal readers. He failed to do so.

Straight's failure, however, does not indicate that the anticommunist convictions he claimed in 1948 were insincere. For example, Straight and his journal did attack Wallace and the Progressive Party. But Straight and *The New Republic* appeared more concerned with the potential of the cases to discredit liberal Democrats than with the truth of the issue raised or the problem of communist espionage. In its initial story after Hiss was convicted, *The New Republic* devoted more space to the political implications of the conviction than to other issues involved. Complained *The New Republic,* "the extreme Right of the Republican Party is jubilant. The political element personified by Representative Richard M. Nixon (Calif.) scarcely waited for the courtroom to clear before capitalizing on the verdict." Earlier, when the Hiss case first became public, Straight wrote that "grave as the charges are in this case, America is once again in graver danger from the accusers than from the accused." And when Dr. Klaus Fuchs, a physicist who worked on the atomic bomb, confessed that he had spied for the Soviet Union, *The New Republic* lamented that he gave "new fuel to the loyalty-testers and witch-hunters, in and out of Congress."

Straight feared the damage that might be done both to civil liberties and to the electoral prospects of liberal Democrats. He made *The New Republic* into a persistent critic of "McCarthyism." The space devoted to attacking McCarthyism exceeded many times the space given the Hiss-Chambers and similar cases. Straight was an anticommunist when he edited *The New Republic,* but he was first a highly partisan liberal Democrat. He regarded revelations about Soviet spying and communists in high places as ammunition for those who would discredit liberalism and preferred to depreciate the importance of the Hiss-Chambers case even if doing so required a lack of candor.

Although Straight failed to use his knowledge of Soviet spying to help the readers of *The New Republic* put the Hiss case in perspective, we can be grateful that, even after too long a silence, he has finally described his own foray into communism and espionage. However, his misleading description of what he wrote about the Hiss case suggests that his memoir should be read with a wary eye. □

Killed by Kindness

Drew Middleton: *Crossroads of Modern Warfare;* Doubleday; New York.

by Stephen J. Sniegoski

According to what currently passes as the conventional wisdom (left-liberal, of course), peace is the normal condition of mankind and war is a primitive, irrational aberration. Military force, it is alleged, does not decide anything; what is important is the art of persuasion and economic plenty. From these assumptions, it is argued that the United States cannot prevent the victory of pro-Soviet communism in Central America or anywhere else by military means, but can only do so by promoting social change and providing economic largess. Moreover, the United States should dismantle its defense establishment and redirect those resources to the "real" social-welfare needs of both Americans and the people of the world. The question of whether a defenseless country will continue to exist is not addressed.

As is usually the case, the conventional wisdom is far off the mark. Even a cursory study of history shows that wars have not only been commonplace (the present is no exception), but that wars have been critical in determining mankind's political institutions and cultural values. The victor in war is able to impose his will on the vanquished. History is, in a sense, a story of war and its results.

The critical impact of wars on history is brought out by Drew Middleton, military-affairs correspondent for the *New York Times,* in *Crossroads of Modern Warfare.* This work discusses 16 battles of the 20th century which the author considers to be the most significant either in shaping the course of history or in introducing new military technology and so revolutionizing the nature of warfare. The battles Middleton selects are expected ones, including The Marne, Midway, Stalingrad, Normandy, Dien Bien Phu, Tet. One exception is the battle of Imphal-Kohima, which Middleton acknowledges to be unknown to most Americans. It took place at the border of India and Burma in early 1944; in it, British and Indian troops utterly smashed the Japanese, thus preventing their invasion into India and paving the way for their expulsion from southern Asia.

Middleton discusses both the strictly military aspects of these battles and their political ramifications. But from these vignettes on particular battles a broader, though implicit, message on warfare in general emerges. In the discussions of

Dr. Sniegoski is a historian with the Federal government.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the various attributes contributing to success in the battles—strategy, armaments, tactics, manpower—virtue is conspicuously absent. The good guys do not necessarily win battles, contrary to the myriad Hollywood movies on World War II in which a few nice Americans inevitably defeat innumerable nasty nazis. Contrary to the myth of virtue triumphant (e.g., during the Vietnam War, it was commonly maintained that the combat superiority of North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers compared to the South Vietnamese demonstrated the superiority of their cause), it would appear that the side whose leadership is most brutal, indifferent to the lives of its own troops as well as to those of the enemy, fares the best in combat. Thus, in the spring of 1940 the armies of the democratic Allies crumbled in the face of the nazi blitzkrieg, while, in contrast, the Russians at Stalingrad, who were forced to bear the most severe hardships by their communist masters, eventually emerged victorious. Governments that care the least about the condition of their individual citizens are best able to force them to endure the intense suffering inherent to war.

This generalization—the more brutal the government the greater its military prowess—is underscored by the results of the armed conflicts between the West and communist countries. The French were defeated in Indochina; the United States was unable to win either there or in Korea. In these wars the communists' willingness to sacrifice countless numbers of their own people offset the West's substantial technological superiority. The communists' indifference to the loss of life did not necessarily mean battlefield victories, but their ability to continue this indefinitely eventually wore down the West. Middleton emphasizes that the Tet Offensive was completely quashed by American and South Vietnamese forces, but the suicidal offensive, despite its defeat, substantially weakened support for the war on the American home front. In the end, it was not that the Western armies were exhausted by the struggle, but that Western governments and societies were unable to continue the sustained brutality needed to win protracted wars.

The inherent martial prowess of the brutal totalitarian state provides an interesting message regarding the current concern about nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are usually portrayed as the bane of mankind. Even security-minded Americans who reject as suicidal a unilateral nuclear freeze and are skeptical of arms agreements with the Soviet Union still proclaim a desire for nuclear weapons to be eliminated, if the Soviet Union (and other nuclear powers) would do likewise and if such a universal nuclear disarmament were verifiable. There is a strong consensus that it would be much better had these weapons never existed. The impact of the elimination (or nonexistence) of nuclear weapons on the relative military strengths of the United States and the Soviet Union, however, would not be symmetrical. Considering the inability of the West to defeat second-rate communist powers in the conventional wars of Korea and Indochina, it is hard to believe that it could have successfully resisted the full onslaught of the Red Army. Would a conventionally armed NATO have fared dramatically better than the Allies against Hitler in the spring of 1940? It's not likely. Instead of being an unmitigated evil, nuclear weapons, by obviating the possibility of a purely conventional war with the Soviets, can be viewed as the fundamental reason why the West has been able to maintain its freedom in the post-World War II period.

Middleton touches on the question of a conventional defense of Western Europe in a chapter on the American bombing of the bridges in Hanoi which introduced the use of Remotely Piloted Munitions ("smart" bombs). Middleton argues that these easily deployable, economical, versatile weapons will revolutionize warfare by providing a great advantage to the defense, canceling an attacker's superiority in manpower and armor. Thus, Middleton maintains that, for the first time, NATO could successfully defend Western Europe in nonnuclear warfare, acknowledging that before the advent of these weapons such a conventional defense was impossible. It would be comforting to believe that the West now has the ability to protect itself without unleashing the horrors of nuclear war, but one is tempted to believe

In the Mail

***Foreign Assistance: A View from the Private Sector* by Kenneth W. Thompson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** Argues the morality of aid, which is quite different than the greenbacks-are-an-emerging-country's-best-friend approach.

***The Well of Silence* by Ethan Gray; Traditionalist Press; Louisville, KY.** It's best to remain quiet.

***How to Understand People: An Introduction to Personality and Character* by Sidney Vernon; Rovern Press; Willimantic, CT.** Physical fitness for the psyche, a sort of dance aerobics as social intercourse.

***Religion and the Constitution: A Reinterpretation* by Peter J. Ferrara; Free Congress Research and Education Foundation; Washington, DC.** Shows that God is accorded fewer rights by the State than high school socialists are.

***The Standard Dictionary of Philosophy* edited by Dagobert D. Runes; Philosophical Library; New York.** "Agnoiology is the doctrine of ignorance which seeks to determine what we are necessarily ignorant of": this work, a valuable reference, shows the efforts made throughout history to diminish that ignorance. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that were this the case, the "peace" movement, "concerned" scientists, bishops, and news commentators would soon begin to decry the inhumanity of these sophisticated nonnuclear weapons (after all, they do kill people) and demand their elimination.

It would seem that the West has now become too humane to engage successfully in warfare, a savage business in which the most brutal tend to reign supreme. For over three decades, the existence of nuclear arms made it unnecessary for the West to prove itself in a full-scale war. But now even the potential consequences of nuclear war have come to violate the tender consciences of many Westerners. The purity of their humane ideals requires the elimination of nuclear weapons. Ideals, however, do not for long remain apart from a society's ability to defend itself. The ultimate result of the West's current humaneness can only be the replacement of humane Western culture and civilization by the savagery of Soviet communism. □

Normalizing the Abnormal

Malcolm M. Feeley: *Court Reform on Trial;* Basic Books; New York.

Norval Morris: *Madness and the Criminal Law;* The University of Chicago Press; Chicago.

by Betsy Clarke

Society's criminal laws represent its unified system of values regarding both expected conduct and punishment. Formulated by majorities in state legislatures, frequently after intense public pressure, our statutes reflect not just our standards for behavior, but a continuing affirmation of a moral code that has been accepted for centuries. The purpose of the criminal-justice system would therefore seem obvious: encourage conformity to civilized norms, punish and separate those who breach those norms as efficiently and fairly as possible. Rehabilitation of offenders would certainly bring society advantages, but it is not always possible, nor is it necessary for the satisfactory functioning of the culture.

The citizenry is divided, albeit unevenly, into two opposing groups on the subject of criminal law: proaccused and procommunity, with the proaccused writing most of the books and moderating the debate. The proaccused see our criminal laws, though well-meaning, as needing modification according to a defendant's economic and cultural background, political beliefs, and even self-image. They have a certain automatic sympathy with defendants, believing that no one is all bad. But it is the process of judgment, so highly structured and possibly leading to confinement, that they most resent. Evading any acknowledgment of an individual's moral culpability in perpetrating a criminal act, the proaccused urge the system to administer its laws in a practical manner. The thought that *two* lives, the victim's and the criminal's, should be thrown away reduces them to tears. They point out the tremendous financial costs of penitentiaries, as if economics are more important than ethics, and add that imprisoning the convicted can never bring the poor victim back to life. As for the protection of society, well, society, they claim, contributed to the defendant's delinquency. Why shouldn't it bear some of the punishment?

Frequently, the proaccused take the legal presumption of innocence until proven guilty to be synonymous with innocence in fact, or at least relative innocence. Greater evils, such as capitalism or corporal punishment, are blamed for and contrasted to the defendant's behavior. Compared to the manufacturing of deadly missiles, are a few cases of arson so bad?

Generally, the vocabulary of the proaccused represents a double standard. "Reform," for example, will do to describe liberal pretrial release programs but not to describe abolition of the exclusionary rule. "Public defender" means a lawyer who is paid by the public to defeat the public's interest in its own safety. Most astonishingly, the proaccused are not above pontificating that the interests of the public and the convicted criminal are the same by suggesting that unless these deviates go free, the Bill of Rights is somehow endangered.

The proaccused cannot decide whether poverty breeds virtue or violence, so they have it both ways. While insisting that money will eradicate the need and therefore the incidence of armed robbery, drug use, and premeditated murder, they nevertheless blame mammon for the corruption of the rich, who steal by overcharging innocent people and murder by operating the unsafe factories in which they work. Could it be that criminal behavior is not a function of income at all, but a symptom of spiritual bankruptcy and failed morale?

The issue, really, is values, and since there is no middle ground in discussing these subjects, books like Mr. Feeley's are rendered hypocritical. They urge something as benevolently nebulous as "reform" without having the courage to defend the kind of society their reforms would bring. In *Court Reform on Trial,* Feeley chooses to discuss rather peripheral issues of the system: bail reform, pretrial diversion, sentence reform, speedy trial rules. Regarding bail proceedings, Feeley advocates a "rights-oriented advocacy process" without delineating why it is needed. The Supreme Court, after all, has never acknowledged a constitutional right to bail, so what "rights" are the defenders to advocate? Furthermore, the criteria by which bail is set cannot always assess the danger to the public. Son of Sam, who had a loving family, strong community ties, and a steady job, would have been, on paper,

Miss Clarke is a law student and freelance writer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an excellent risk for release on his own recognizance, a reform Feeley advocates.

Regarding the right to a speedy trial, Feeley rightly (and briefly) points out that delay benefits defendants, many of whom blatantly and deliberately throw roadblocks into the proceedings and then claim a violation of their rights. It is not, of course, a speedy trial the defendant wants when he asserts this constitutional guarantee, but dismissal of his case, the most likely sanction. That is why courts such as Michigan's require the defendant to show prejudice as a result of delayed trial, a qualification Feeley abhors.

Generally, "reforms" that would cost more money and add more personnel are to Feeley's liking. He wants to further politicize public defenders, encouraging them to be even more active in the "policymaking arena." Judicial activism in "expanding law to meet new social conditions" and legislative restraint are also among his favorites. Like so many "reformers," Feeley suffers from serious myopia when it comes to human nature; he refuses to accept the fact that frequently the status quo exists, after much trial and error, because it is more satisfactory than the alternatives. For example, many defendants of promise, on being offered a few hours with a social worker in lieu of a criminal record, opt for the criminal record instead. More serious are Feeley's lapses into loaded radical rhetoric. What does he mean by "sympathetic and political prisoners?"

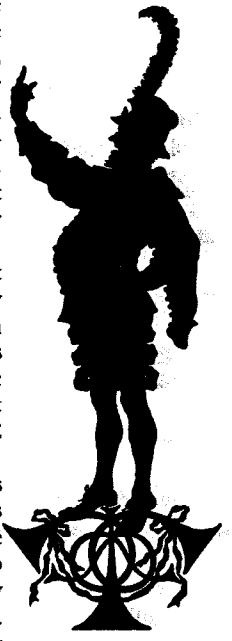
The real problem with *Court Reform on Trial* is that it does not address or even seem to accept the central purposes of the criminal-justice system. The fact that a potentially dangerous accused might *not* be walking the streets seems to worry him more than threats to the public safety. That virtually all of the prison inmates are *guilty* of the crimes for which they serve time seems to him no particular victory for the process. Many aspects of our system of justice are unsatisfactory, but it takes reading the recommendations of *Court Reform on Trial* to remind one that it could be worse.

What can be said about Norval Morris's *Madness and the Criminal Law,* which offers something to everyone? There are quotations from Kant, Plato, and papal encyclicals; the scribbles on the chapter headings certainly accent his theme on how the law should address insanity, retardation, and fugue states when related to criminal behavior. In addition, he has penned two well-written, rather engaging shaggy-dog stories juxtaposing issues of moral guilt and the utilitarian requirements of the law. As an intellectual exercise, the book has merit.

There is also a lot of factual information —statistical and otherwise—supporting his thesis that the mentally incompetent should be tried with special compensations made for their condition. He further believes that the insanity defense should be reserved for those few cases where the defendant is completely out of touch with reality, the remaining majority handled under the diminished-responsibility theory, and the punishment adjusted accordingly. He amply demonstrates the hypocrisy of the insanity defense by suggesting that "gross social adversity" is equally meritorious of special consideration, and by pointing out that the insanity defense is used only against the most serious charges and mostly to escape the death penalty. (Incidentally, this book was written before the Hinckley verdict.) He also keeps society in mind, refusing to admit that its increased peril is

Religion in America

It is well known that religion in America is, and has been for some years, undergoing a major overhaul. Before the lay person can make an intelligent evaluation of that, he must first determine exactly what changes are actually being made. It's rather like the difference between redecorating and remodeling. Theologians like Hans Kung, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Rosemary Reuther seem to be engaged in radical remodeling, that is, tearing down the supporting walls. But there are other changes, which, unfortunately, are often condemned along with that sinister remodeling. What these alterations really amount to is changing the face, that is, the appearance, of religion to achieve more contemporary attractiveness.



In a large midwestern auditorium recently, there was an event advertised as a gospel jubilee. That designation would lead many to expect to hear tunes like "Amazing Grace," "How Great Thou Art," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and other hymns/spirituals from days gone by. Guess again. What blasted from the gigantic speakers had a different beat. The performers' sound equipment and musical skills rivaled anything The Rolling Stones or AC/DC could ever muster. There is a new genre—gospel rock.

What the young people in the mostly black audience heard was rock; what they saw was "with it" black singers and musicians shouting, in front of thousands of people, "Praise the Lord!" The young man jive-struttin' across the stage was not embarrassed to proclaim "I love Jesus!" The listeners saw and heard blacks they could admire, even emulate, saying "I don't need dope *or* welfare. . . . If you're down and out it's because you choose to be. . . . *You* are responsible for your own destiny. . ." If these rockin' Christians are the new role models for young blacks, even purists should applaud their methods. After all, who wants to imitate a social worker? □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the necessary price of such justice.

In practice, though, it is difficult to know what effects the implementation of his proposals would have. As Feeley noted, the system has a way of creatively reverting to old habits, and while Morris's proposals (which he urges on the legislatures rather than the courts) would make the process logically consistent, how differently the public and the convicted would actually fare is unknown.

Probably the most controversial section of Morris's book is his final chapter on punishment. Punishment being costly, he suggests that as a deterrent it has maximum effect when it is used sparingly. So long as the process remains equal for all, and so long as the punishment is not out of proportion to the crime, he sees no problem with unequal treatment for the similarly culpable.

Madness and the Criminal Law, with its philosophy, law, sociology, psychology, and fiction, is both an intellectual treatise and a tease. Legal scholars respect Norval Morris the lawyer, professor, and writer; they should urge him to pursue his talents as a novelist. □

Driven to Tears

Albert Bermel: *Farce;* Simon and Schuster; New York.

by Carson Daly

Humor, of course, is a funny thing. These days, however, it seems to be getting funnier and funnier—or as Alice in Wonderland says, "curiouser and curiouser." Unfortunately, this means that we are treated to a lot more funny-peculiar than funny-ha-ha humor. Moreover, much so-called humor is not funny at all, but rather strange, grim, and grotesque—like the "Mommy-mommy" jokes of elementary-school fame. In recent years, it seems as if the vast spectrum of humor has narrowed so that it includes mainly two extremes. One is the cynical, rapier-witted epigrams of the world-weary who live east of the Hudson and west of the Atlantic. The other is the lowbrow slapstick popular with those who derive intellectual inspiration from the *Dukes of Hazzard,* pay to watch reruns of *The Three Stooges,* still mourn the cancellation of *The Gong Show* (for which they find *The People's Court* a poor substitute), and admire the destructive rock chic of bird-decapitators like Ozzy Osbourne.

Professor Daly is with the English department at the University of Notre Dame.

Although the sated liberal epigrammatists can be, and often are, unpleasant, they provide no competition in sheer obnoxiousness for the providers of material for the second-mentioned group who, it would seem, are in the process of inheriting at least much of the media, if not all of the earth. The hour of *Mad Magazine* and *Animal House* has come at last, despite the brave efforts of Miss Manners and others still armed with scruples, taste, morals, and hat pins, to stave them off.

In keeping with the modern democratic tendency to confer academic respectability on virtually any subject by devoting a thorough book to it, we should not be surprised to see appear on the horizon a nearly 500-page tome devoted to "a cumulative biography of farce." Mr. Albert Bermel, the author of this work, knows and loves his material; it is not everyone who could chronicle hysteria and high jinks from Aristophanes to *Animal House* without flinching. There are still fewer who could appreciate two and more millennia of flying custard pies, talking animals, and animated machines tormenting mankind: "This book celebrates the danger, destruction, and torment of farce, an ancient form of merry-making. Short and long farces date back to men's and women's first attempts to scoff in public at whatever their neighbors cherished in private." It takes a man of high good humor and considerable endurance to find the same old tricks, lines, and settings not mildly amusing but hysterically funny time after time in century after century in country after country.

It may also take, as Mr. Bermel suggests himself, a case of arrested development and a certain lack of discrimination: "farce is by its nature popular; it makes a gut appeal to the entire spectrum of the public, from illiterate to intellectuals." This, however, does not alarm Mr. Bermel, who glories in the very perversity and commonness of farce. He proclaims with delight: "Being a destroyer and detractor, farce is a negating force. . . . Farce flouts the bounds of reason, good taste, fairness, and what we commonly call sanity," and he waxes rhapsodic when he announces: "Farce deals with the unreal, with the worst one can dream or dread. Farce is cruel, often brutal, even murderous." To do Mr. Bermel credit, he writes glibly and often with a certain tongue-in-cheek charm of the cruel, the brutal, and murderous, as well as about the cruelly brutal, brutally cruel, murderously brutal, and cruelly murderous. Aside from being quite off base on medieval drama when he claims that "Religious worship and theater have always been intertwined *competitors*" (emphasis added), he does a reasonably good job. The problem however, lies in the existential value of farcical competence. What are we to make of a man who writes enchantedly of "a bed-bug recaptured by a posse of crawling scientists," or who pens: "In such company an animated toothbrush, cigar, and Pernod can feel at ease"?

For Mr. Bermel, it seems that the glory of farce is that it requires no existential value or transcendental context and actually militates against them. For him the absurdity is enough. He relishes the "humor" of *Little Murders* in which "Patsy and her boyfriend will be married by a hippie priest who's been instructed not to mention God." He heartily enjoys such staples of farce as "the man in drag": "Chances are that at some point in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

action a man, preferably an older man and even more preferably a sedate father, will find himself in a woman's clothes, or better, undergarments or, better yet, a nun's garb." Approvingly, Mr. Bermel tells us: "At this the audience will shriek, rather than laugh, especially the married women." The author also appreciates the outrageousness of Buck Henry's film *The First Family* in which the President "allows his daughter . . . to couple with a stone statue of an island god, [and] trades her virginity, which she is eager to lose, for an island formula, human excrement, which produces great vegetables." The obviously pleased author concludes with the reassuring observation that "It doesn't look as if farce will run dry."

Actually, however, the whole weight of the book and of experience in modern society seems to indicate the opposite. Mr. Bermel seems a great deal more au courant when he wonders whether it is "possible to exaggerate the parade of calamities that reaches us in the newspaper every morning and afternoon and on the TV set every evening and on the radio every twenty-two minutes" and when he admits that although "To some writers farce appears needlessly irrational, yet farce's irrationalities cannot begin to match those of life." Indeed, one wonders how the abnormal staples of farce can seem funny when they have now become normal. How can we laugh at "men in drag" when transvestism has become a national epidemic? Can we chortle over men in nun's clothes when there are no longer many habits—much less many nuns? Where will the joke be in a hippie priest marrying a couple without mentioning God in a country with the World Council of Churches? What will we find amusing in farcical settings which keep the characters feeling unsteady when at least half of the audience is divorced, taking Valium, visiting psychiatrists, doing physical therapy, practicing T.M., using biofeedback techniques to reduce stress, and living on yogurt and bran to combat the ill effects of fat around the heart?

How could we hope to find farces which shrink "the difference in consciousness between objects and people" in a society mad for robotics, artificial intelligence, and user-friendly computers? Will people at the mercy of their own blenders, Cusinarts, cameras, cars, electric garage doors, lawn mowers—and dependent upon their artificial organs, pacemakers, and cornea transplants—find the revolt of machines so humorous? Will the millions of workers replaced by robots be alive to the charm of an actress acting as a living newsstand while a robotic receptionist inexpensively impersonates a Kelly girl? Will a whole world living in the shadow of nuclear holocaust—courtesy of one mistakenly pushed button or one quirk in a computer—find the farcical revenge the machine wreaks on man so funny? Perhaps not.

As long as we live in the kind of world we do, farce is a somewhat superfluous genre. Whereas it once had the purpose of poking fun at the verities, of puncturing the establishment's balloons, of showing wild contradictions to the normal state of affairs, today life itself plays that role. Fictional farce simply cannot outdo factual farce. No author could conceive of wilder incongruities than the ones with which we live. How can farce artists hope to prosper when they are forced to compete with the ACLU which actually sues President Reagan for calling 1983 "the year of the Bible" and defends male strippers in Oregon against being banned? Perhaps, with all apologies to Mr. Bermel, we must conclude that farce has no fictional future at the moment; farce has moved to fact or perhaps fact has moved to farce, showing that George Bernard Shaw was right when he asserted that "humanity is so grotesque that it cannot be caricatured." What could be more farcically factual than that? □

The Ingersoll Prizes
in
Literature and the Humanities
1983

The T. S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing
Jorge Luis Borges
Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters
James Burnham
Kent, Connecticut

The Ingersoll Foundation
of
Rockford, Illinois

Clayton R. Gaylord, *Chairman*
John A. Howard, *President*

Leopold Tyrmand,
Executive Secretary,
The Ingersoll Prizes

The awards, in the amount of $15,000 each, will be presented at a ceremony at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Chicago on December 8, 1983. Invitation only.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENDABLES

Skewering Schlesinger

Thomas B. Silver: ***Coolidge and the Historians;*** Carolina Academic Press; Durham, NC.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. is widely regarded as one of America's leading historians, scholars, and writers. The author of several books and a frequent contributor to esteemed highbrow publications, he has received the Bancroft Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his achievements. However, if Thomas B. Silver's *Coolidge and the Historians* enjoys the wide circulation it richly deserves, his acclaim will plummet dramatically. Written to defend Calvin Coolidge and his successor, Herbert Hoover, against the charges leveled at them by regnant historians, this valuable study is a telling indictment of the tendentiousness and patent dishonesty to which Professor Schlesinger and his academic epigones stooped in order to remake the past into a support for left-liberal dogmas. The truth about America's 30th President —that he was an industrious and profound statesman, a cultivated interpreter of Dante and Cicero, and a decisive leader of broad vision and unimpeachable moral character—simply will not do, since Coolidge was a conservative Republican who presided over a period of stability and prosperity. And so, with encouragement and help from lesser savants, the sage from Harvard contrived a suitable myth: Coolidge the unresourceful and indolent pawn of rapacious businessmen. But the myth is as phony as the historiography which created it. With wit barbed with sarcasm, Dr. Silver catches Dr. Schlesinger mendaciously lifting snatches of quotes out of context, obscuring his sources, ignoring or distorting pertinent evidence, and consistently violating his own professed principles. In an essay on the Civil War, Schlesinger opined: "We must judge the men of the past with the same forbearance and charity which we hope the future will apply toward us." It is an ironically appropriate epitaph for his own reputation. (BC) □

West of Belle Isle

Loren D. Estleman: ***The Glass Highway;*** Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

> On the bandstand a black pianist with a weightlifter's torso was tearing chords out of the keyboard in long, ragged strips while his partners on horn and bass stood by nodding and grunting behind dark glasses. It sounded to me like someone kicking a box of Lincoln Logs downstairs, but then I'm a Fats Waller man.

There are few like Amos Walker, the speaker of those lines, few who even know that Fats Waller existed, to say nothing of what he did. This is because there are few writers like Loren D. Estleman. Estleman is a pro. We hasten to add that by *pro* we mean professional, not prostitute. Some in certain circles that Estleman writes about in *The Glass Highway* would naturally assume the second meaning. Although he is just 30, Estleman is the author of 13 books, both Westerns and mysteries. Some who put pen to paper would rather pledge their first-born than even admit to thinking about writing in those genres. But Estleman has no need to feel any embarrassment: he is making a living through the books. More importantly, they are good. He is a member of a rare avant-garde: he writes normal books. What's more, he seems to care about what he is doing. For example, two of his earlier novels have Sherlock Holmes as the protagonist; one pits Holmes against Bram Stoker's (not Hollywood's) Dracula and the other features a confrontation with Mr. Hyde (Stevenson's). Estleman doesn't simply act as a copycat; he has internalized the original texts so well that his productions have no rough edges—and it's hard to find the seams.

For *The Glass Highway* and the other three Amos Walker mysteries Estleman, it seems, went to the master of the genre: Raymond Chandler. Walker isn't exactly Marlowe (the original, not Bogart's), but they do share a cadence and an attitude. Whereas Marlowe cruised the streets that held platinum blondes looking for a role, mugs gone west, and needle-pushing physicians, Walker's turf is Detroit. If anything, the Motor City of today is less appealing than the L.A. Chandler delineated. Estleman didn't create his city with a visitor's guide from Cobo Hall and a road map; he knows it. Intimately. There is passion under Walker's cynicism; both are born of the place. Detroit was once known for its craftsmen, its skilled workers. Estleman, although a resident of a town west of the city, can still be considered part of Motown's artisanal tradition. □

Books & the Crisis of Culture

Peter Mann: ***From Author to Reader: A Social Study of Books;*** Routledge & Kegan Paul; Boston.

When it comes to the subject of sociology and books, it seems that Marxists of one breed or another are in the vanguard, touting obfuscating theories that are supposed to "demystify" things (i.e., lay bare the dominant bourgeois ideology that creates the superstructure raised over the unequal economic base—whew!). The gang of three from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research—Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse—have the monopoly at present. Their observations on "the culture industry," which sometimes goes by an alias, "the consciousness industry," are marketable commodities in journals where such things are of value. There was a slight devaluation a few years back, but then Walter Benjamin was "rediscovered," and since he and Adorno were pals . . .

Peter Mann's book is like a fresh wind blowing through a fetid cheese factory. Mann truly reveals things as he points out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how little is actually known about the relationships between authors and books and books and readers. Why does an author write a particular book? Is it because he has something to say; if so, does he think that anybody is inclined to listen? Or does the author look at book-writing as an occupation; if so, then would he be inclined to write anything but a grocery-store romance or a diet book, both types of best-sellers? Why does a reader select a particular book from (a) all of the available categories and (b) from the specific category in which he is interested? (A note about readers is in order: there are precious few of them. Mann indicates that in England "only about half the population uses bookstores at all" and that libraries in that country aren't deluged by anxious readers—and this is in a society "where 'book learning' still carries high prestige and affords high social status.") Mann raises these and several other questions and provides many tentative answers. The fact that there can be so many answers undermines the certainty of many of the statements made by the Frankfurt gang.

One conclusion that Mann presents should be of signal concern to all who support cultural standards that aren't defined by TV sitcoms. Mann states that "interest in, and readership of, the modern literary novel is restricted to a very small minority of the population for whom novel reading is a specialized interest." Not only are there fewer readers, but those who still read aren't reading what is conventionally considered "literature." Although art is elitist, it is also true that novels are, in a sense, commodities. Authors who may be best able to interpret and define aspects of this world,on which, we are often told, nothing can be "known," may find themselves unable to communicate their message: there would be no room on the presses for what may be of enduring value. This is not to suggest that entertaining books be curtailed; a world wherein only Kafka could be read would be truly Kafkaesque. It is to recommend that the works by those whom we have elsewhere designated *dwarfs* be shown to be the vapid, meaningless productions that they are, which would, perhaps, keep them from being the "blockbusters" that they do not deserve to be. Those modern texts that express the idea that there still exist valid standards and concepts that can be known and which should be affirmed and promulgated would then be more readily able to make it through the welter on the shelves. □

In Focus

Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

Peter Brown and Steven Gaines: *The Love You Make: An Insider's Story of The Beatles;* McGraw-Hill; New York.

by Brian Murray

At first, nobody thought The Beatles would last. True, throughout the winter and spring of 1964, every department store in the Western world was amply stocked with the icons of Beatlemania—Beatle wigs and Beatle dolls and Beatle T-shirts and Beatle beach balls. But since the late 1950's, many a rock'n'roll act had been as widely adored as the hula hoop and lasted about as long. Elvis Presley was still making millions even as the folk singers, the surf-music specialists, and the Bryl-creemed crooners from South Philadelphia came and, within a year, went; but then Presley was, well, Presley. How could these "mop-topped" Englishmen ever be as big as Presley?

Of course, for the next six years, The Beatles did remain the most popular blokes in the whole global village. And packaging helped—especially in the beginning. When Brian Epstein discovered the group back in 1961, they were still playing in seedy beat clubs, still wearing black leather jackets and rolled-up blue jeans. Sensing that a successful pop group must possess what he called "classless" appeal, Epstein shrewdly put The Beatles in Pierre Cardin suits and taught

them how to bow. He let them keep—even play up—their slangy Liverpool accents, but he also let it be known that John Lennon read James Joyce, and that Paul McCartney knew a Picasso when he saw one.

But packaging minus talent equals Fabian. And The Beatles, mirabile dictu, did have talent. In the beginning, they appeared live on the Ed Sullivan Show and proved to 70 million transfixed souls that they could perform their own upbeat compositions with both skill and hammy enthusiasm. In the years that followed, they wrote and recorded such fetchingly melodic songs as "Yesterday" and "Michelle" and "Eleanor Rigby"—songs that were quickly covered by string orchestras and chamber ensembles; by all-male choirs and all-girl accordian bands. In 1967 they released the meticulously multi-tracked and overdubbed *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*—a pioneering "concept" album which sold millions of copies, even as some highbrow critics likened its lyrics to those of T. S. Eliot, and found in its musical lyricism the spirit of Schumann. In essence, then, The Beatles wound up doing for rock what Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington, three decades earlier, had done for jazz: they made it respectable in certain circles.

As the turbulent 60's progressed, The Beatles' supramusical status increased. Wherever they went, the youth of Europe and America eventually followed. When "The Fab Four" suddenly adopted gaudy hippie-type garb, they created a mass market for bell-bottom trousers, "love beads," and wide, flower-patterned ties. When they announced their allegiance to the giggling swami, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, they sparked a pop-mysticism craze that continued well into the 70's. And when they spoke flippantly of the alleged therapeutic and creative benefits of LSD, they greatly abetted the rise of psychedelamania and thus, alas, the formation of the drug culture that surrounds us still.

And yet, through it all, The Beatles themselves remained among the most private of public men. They lived behind gates on huge estates in suburban London's "stockbroker's belt" and granted few interviews. From

Dr. Murray is with the English Department at Youngstown State University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

each other, from their entourage, they expected adherence to what Peter Brown—a longtime functionary in the Beatle empire—describes as a "code of silence." Basically, that code was respected until 1970, when an embittered John Lennon sat down with *Rolling Stone* editor Jann Wenner in order to confirm, once and for all, that though he was obviously a genius he was surely no saint.

Since then, many books have appeared retailing the behind-the-scenes squabbles and debaucheries that accompanied The Beatles' Epstein-engineered ascent to fame. *The Love You Make* is the latest and least discreet in that genre. Herein we are matter-of-factly informed that the baby-faced Paul McCartney was a Casanova-class womanizer and a seasoned manipulator whose back-door business deals helped prompt The Beatles' acrimonious breakup; that the Krishna-quoting George Harrison secured nearly as many amours as McCartney, and was even tighter with a quid. We learn also that Lennon was at one point addicted to heroin as well as to the imperious Yoko Ono; that he often punched his first wife, the hapless Cynthia; that he regularly baited Epstein—an increasingly unbalanced fellow given to gulping barbiturates and biamphetamines and to seeking homosexual liaisons in public lavatories.

One leaves a book like *The Love You Make* a bit depressed, but convinced that, in the end, The Beatles' music is far more interesting than The Beatles themselves or any "insider's" account of their blunders and frivolities. □

A Friend Indeed?

Stuart Miller: *Men and Friendship;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Carlisle G. Packard

Upon learning of the death of his friend Jonathan, David lamented: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (II Samuel 1:26).

To modern man, this kind of friendship seems proper only for the ancients. Indeed, any contemporary male friendship of comparable depth would most likely be considered homosexual. But this is a rather superficial excuse for not seeking the rewards of such a relationship. Why is true male friendship so rare in our day? What must men do to develop the kind of a bond Jonathan and David had? These are the questions Stuart Miller sets out to answer in *Men and Friendship.* When Miller was newly divorced he sought to fill the emptiness in his personal life with male friendship. What he found disappointed him: he was in middle age yet had no intimate male friends. The awareness of that absence initiated his search for friendship. That search resulted in this book, which incorporates insights from hundreds of interviews with men about their friendships and also contains his own recounting of attempts to form close friendships. The weakness of *Men and Friendship* is its misperception of the effects of modernity on friendship, and perhaps even of the nature of friendship itself. Yet it is provocative and provides an outstanding example of the lengths to which one must go to attain rare friendship.

In a chapter entitled "The Death of Intimacy in Our Times," Miller adduces historical evidence to explain the "reasons for male friendship's current disappearance." He states that "the decline of friendships in our time must be seen against the decline in intensity and closeness of all human relationships." Perhaps it is true that industrialism, the market economy, and mobility have decreased opportunities for intimacy, but it is also true that modernity has expanded other opportunities, e.g., increasing the numbers of people we meet and allowing contact by telephone. It is quite possible that modernity has bestowed as many new advantages as it has destroyed old ones. What, then, is to explain the disappearance of modern friendship? Nothing; it has not disappeared. In every age friendship, truly understood, has been exceedingly rare; what most persons consider friendship today would not pass the strict test set by Laelius, the main speaker in Cicero's famous dialogue *On Friendship.* After discussing the qualities of sublime friendship, he says: "And I am not now speaking of the friendships of everyday folk, or of ordinary people—although even these are a source of pleasure and profit—but of true and perfect friendship, the kind that was possessed by those few men who have gained names for themselves as friends."

True friendship, then, is so rare that it gives the illusion of disappearance. Properly viewed, it is an ethical problem, a virtue to be attained. To Cicero and Aristotle, the two most-noted ancient writers on friendship, man was a mixture of base and noble impulses. Virtue consisted of subordinating the base to the noble through exercise; because of the length and the difficulty of the exercise, the truly virtuous man was rare. And only this man knew real friendship.

Men and Friendship does give some insight into the long, difficult process of virtuous friendship. During his search for friendship Miller kept a journal in which he recorded his thoughts and intimate feelings on the state of his relationship with the men he was trying to befriend. Part of that journal is used in the book. At times the journal seems self-indulgent; frequently it is both interesting and motivating. One can see Miller, for example, reach out to other men through correspondence, sympathy, and generous acts, such as helping a friend move. His failures and pain are noted, as are his triumphs. One can also see his guard come up when he enters a new relationship after a sour experience.

Miller claims that the classical essays on friendship are cold and impersonal. His is a warm, personal book, but it is not an improvement upon the old ones. In a general discussion of friendship, Cicero is peerless. *Men and Friendship,* though not up to this standard, is useful, serving as a reminder of the virtuous nature of friendship. □

Mr. Packard is studying law at Brigham Young University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doing Good With Dirty Hands

***Doing Evil to Achieve Good: Moral Choice in Conflict Situations;* Edited by Richard McCormick and Paul Ramsey;** Loyola University Press; Chicago.

Reportedly, the American transcendentalist Margaret Fuller once self-seriously declared that she was "now prepared to accept the universe." (To which Thomas Carlyle responded, "By [G—], Madam, you'd better!") Most American liberals—transcendentalists of a sort also—would rather not stoop so low as Fuller, however. Their vision of infinite human goodness is so beautiful that they feel horribly imposed upon by a fallen world where good intentions do not preclude baleful consequences and where decent but distraught men frequently find the lesser of two evils to be their best available option. Such simon-pure idealism paves the way to incalculable concrete grief in the real world we all must inhabit. Because liberals are offended by the racism in South Africa and right-wing oppression in Central and South America, they shrilly insist that until a new order of unadulterated peace, democracy, and justice comes into being in these areas, we must have nothing whatever to do with them. Meanwhile, Cuban and Soviet agents relentlessly prepare to inflict suffering upon the people of these regions—black and white—on a scale they have never known. Similarly, with consciences troubled by the implications of nuclear warfare, liberals demand that the West divest itself of its cruel weaponry. The Soviets commend them for their moral integrity—while continuing to amass the firepower necessary to enforce a world-wide tyranny, brutal and dehumanizing beyond all liberal comprehension. Sober observers may indeed be grateful that, for all its blind spots, the current administration has at least noticed that we are now so far east of Eden that naively paradisiacal expectations can only make it easier for totalitarian serpents to get America in their crushing coils.

It would be presumptuous to posit that any of the contributors to *Doing Evil to Achieve Good* support Reagan's policies. The list of "social problems of the first magnitude" offered in the introduction indeed suggests that these theologians and philosophers would prefer to ignore the gulag, Afghanistan, and Poland and instead worry about racism in the United States and repression in "some areas of the Third World." In the text itself, five learned men debate the meaning and value of the Catholic doctrine of the double effect (which justifies actions done for "a proportionately grave reason" but occasioning foreseen yet unintended evil) in abstruse and hypothetical terms far removed from specific evils anywhere in the world. But even from the windows of the scholar's ivory tower, man's moral dilemma appears much more unpleasant than liberals generally acknowledge. In the central essay, "Ambiguity in Moral Choice," Father McCormick argues that "love . . . is always controlled by the possible" and must not be "measured by the mere desire or intention." This means, he further elaborates, that in a world "infected by sin and weakness," we must inevitably permit, though not intend, some evils in order to prevent greater ones. Such insights are central to conservative wisdom. Nonetheless, the convoluted and unresolved arguments in which these scholars engage as they try to establish what evil *is* and how man can distinguish greater evils from lesser ones underscores the commonsense perception that a subtle head can articulate morality's finer points but cannot establish its foundations. For that we need a rarer gift, as several of the contributors acknowledge. Fortunately, the eviction notice served on Adam and Eve was not the last divine message sent to earth. (BC) □

Business as Usual

Emily Stipes Watts: *The Businessman in American Literature;* University of Georgia Press; Athens.

Although fraught with the conventional liberal wisdoms, or trivialities, a TV show aired on NBC called *Family Ties* points to a long-lived aberration presented through the products of American culture as if it is the norm: it is the statement that the businessman is an odd man, a veritable weirdo. The program's scenario presents two 60's protesters who remember sit-ins and dancing nude at Woodstock with nostalgia. However, in the intervening years they have created a family in which Ricky Nelson wouldn't feel uncomfortable. Of course, the father runs a public TV station and the mother must be her "own person" by being an architect, and great masses of granola are consumed. But given the facts that Ozzie never seemed to do anything, that Harriet was too good to be true even in the 50's, and that the Nelsons consumed vast quantities of ice cream, these minor updates can be accepted. The interesting point about *Family Ties* is that the first-born, who is now a high school student, is a thorough-going supporter of the free-enterprise system, a young man for whom "grounding" means an injunction against watching *Wall Street Week.* What is striking is that the would-be—or will-be—businessman, contrary to popular portrayals, is not presented as if he is "going through a stage" like acne; in most cases, he seems to be mature and his parents the adolescents.

For the most part, those who have made money or who aspire to do so have taken a beating in the entertainment media and in the arts in America. After the Bolsheviks took over in Russia, the writers there were instructed with truncheons and less-subtle means to glorify the workers who operated the turret lathes and who harvested the wheat. As Professor Watts shows in *The Businessman in American Literature,* American writers, with few exceptions, have deemed it their duty to denigrate the workers in this country who have "made it," to wield the truncheon against the successful. She argues that this state goes back beyond Babbitt, behind Silas Lapham, all the way to the Puritans. Professor Watts does see some changes on the present scene, evidenced in works by Ken Kesey, Stanley Elkin, and James Dickey. Some of her assertions in this regard, however, are dubious. What is unquestionable is that it's a wonder that any young people in this country who have been exposed to "important" works of American fiction have aspired to do anything but dance nude at Woodstock. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Strategies of Prose Packaging

R.H.W. Dillard: *The First Man on the Sun;* Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

Popular books—science fiction and mysteries, in particular—are often available as double-deckers: two plots in one package, two novellas for the price of one, as distinct from the types in the 19th century, when one part led to another. This current state is brought about by the existence of periodicals in which the writers of these stories can publish for cash; prices are determined by word counts. As many of the science-fiction writers, to concentrate on one group, are professional in the sense that they write in the same way that a bricklayer lays bricks—as a means to an end—they tend to be frugal and to therefore recycle what they can. Previously published

magazine pieces end up between stiff covers. To a certain extent, this approach is becoming a convention. This status can be discerned through R.H.W. Dillard's *The First Man on the Sun,* his second novel.

Dillard is essentially a poet. His four volumes of poetry need not be consulted to determine this; his prose style, with its attention to detail (e.g., a walk through a woods elicits an observation of the sun catching the dew on a spider's web), announces the importance of words. Ideas, unfortunately, take second place. Just as Dillard is a novelist-poet, his novel is of two natures: it is a double-decker, one part science-fiction book, one part conventional novel. *Science* fiction in this case is not as precise as, perhaps, *speculative* would be. That is, men do take off in a vehicle and sail to the sun. But that event is secondary; it exists merely as a convenient frame upon which Dillard crafts his real message, which is something of a Hallmark greeting card to writers including Sterne, Nabokov, Henry Miller, Borges, Ursula LeGuin, and various other innovators of fictional form. Dillard does have a nice touch. For example, the "science" fiction chapters are written in the future tense. But ultimately his book is weak; it does not hold. He has put two disparate works together, two works that are more different than the two distinct plots in a common science-fiction double-decker. Unlike those professional science-fiction writers, Dillard is a *serious* writer, which means that he writes so that his work will be carefully examined. At best, trying to delineate *The First Man on the Sun* becomes an exercise with all of the importance of figuring out whether Certs is a candy mint or a breath mint. □

The Artist as Island

David Storey: *A Prodigal Child;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

In an earlier age, the artist spoke for the community as a whole. If he appeared at all in his art, he typically did so as an unobtrusive, integral part of society—like Chaucer's likable but amusingly inept poet or Dryden's companionable Neander. But at least since the Romantics, the artist has become an ever-more-solitary figure, alienated from the world at large and self-seriously preoccupied with affirming the uniqueness of his own talented sensitivity. Perhaps at first some advantages of independence, variety, and honesty accrued to this introspective individuality, but the long-term consequence has been to make art a stranger or an enemy to life. When almost every writer is determined to march to the beat of a different drummer, and to call as much attention as possible to the idiosyncracies of his own rhythm, then the steady social cadences of faith and principle are inevitably drowned out in a horrid cacophony. Indeed, one of the reasons that the 20th century is so fragmented is that so many artists have for so long championed the sovereignty of the daringly original and imaginative self. The disintegration is now so far advanced that those few like Walker Percy and Saul Bellow who would refurbish what once was a shared ethical, cultural, and religious legacy make themselves solitary by that very desire. The commonplace tradition, which survived through Samuel Johnson, is gone and with it any hope of a natural relationship between the modern author and his audience. For if the author and his values are genuinely and radically unique, how can the reader hope to es-

tablish sympathy for and interest in any depiction of his artist-protagonist? If the novelist ignores the cohesive traditions of society, or acknowledges them only to disparage them, where are the minds of creator and auditor ever to come together?

Such is the dilemma posed by *A Prodigal Child.* David Storey, winner of Britain's Booker Prize, is possessed of a truly rare talent, especially for capturing the precise features of character and conversation. But there's little meaning or enjoyment in a novel narrowly focused on the highly unusual development of a cold-hearted young sculptor named Bryan who leaves behind, and comes to be ashamed of, his working-class family. In answer to the question "If God doesn't exist, and there is no ultimate purpose, what's the point of living?" the protagonist proposes to make himself into "someone special," someone who can create art that no one else can do—while simultaneously sinking into a bizarre, adulterous fixation on his vain benefactress. On what terms is the reader to share this "point of living," though, especially since Storey's authorial distance from Bryan is slight and no adequate foil appears in the book?

The protagonist does assert at a key point that "There is such a thing as love," but this assertion remains an unfelt abstraction, despite Storey's lame stretching toward some larger communal values in a too-abrupt conclusion in which Bryan rejoins his family. But the final two chapters are mere groping: they are too undeveloped and too contrived to satisfy imaginatively. Still, the author's evident yearning for values larger than the artistic ego is encouraging for all who recognize the allusion in the title. Contrary to Thomas Wolfe, the talented prodigals of modernity may yet go home again. And if they do, we may all join in the joy and feasting. (BC) □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perceptibles

Philip F. Lawler: *Coughing in Ink: The Demise of Academic Ideals;* University Press of America; Washington, D.C.

The fastest-growing health problem in America is not herpes. Rather, it is a condition that manifests itself in wide eyes and slack jaws: astonishment. (It also can be used to explain why P. T. Barnum was such a smashing success.) Recent reports indicating that the American educational system is zooming down the tubes have been the cause of astonishment of late. Mr. Lawler, with wit and perception, details the state of affairs that has led to the educational mishmash. □

* * *

J.I.M. Stewart: *A Villa in France;* W. W. Norton; New York.

In the opening pages of *A Villa in France,* a secondary figure offers an analysis of two central characters based on what he's seen of their tennis play. That his perceptions prove accurate is hardly surprising: John McEnroe is not the only one who reveals aspects of personality through sports behavior. But games are still games. Because their rules are arbitrarily contrived and their objectives of no inherent consequence, they cannot engage the deeper faculties of the mind or heart. And though adroitly performed, *A Villa in France* is a game.

Mr. Stewart, who writes detective stories under the name of Michael Innes, develops his plot and its resolution skillfully, managing a passable forearm smash in the conclusion. Moreover, he can pull off a volley of literary allusions deftly. But for exploring the human condition, Mr. Stewart's authorial perspective does not seem superior to a seat in courtside bleachers. True, one of his characters converts to Roman Catholicism and spends his life exploring philosophy. However, since neither Kierkegaard nor Aquinas can be assessed on the basis of racket technique, Mr. Stewart apparently prefers to keep his attention diverted elsewhere—on the free-swinging bisexuality of one of his characters, for instance. After depicting his Catholic sage in a disparaging light, he expediently kills him off in a train accident without any serious imaginative contact with the problems of faith, evil, or regeneration. A reader of Evelyn Waugh or Walker Percy is likely to cry, "Fault!" Indeed, though Mr. Stewart takes *love* as one of his themes, the reader may well conclude thinking of it as a tennis score. □

* * *

Shari and Bernard Benstock: *Who's He When He's at Home: A James Joyce Directory;* University of Illinois Press; Champaign, IL.

Few writers—and none with a greater stature—were or are as blatantly smug as James Joyce was. While modesty is, of course, a virtue to be commended to most, excessive pride resulted in value in Joyce's case. Joyce, it must be stressed, was not all bluster and no backbone; although he never explicitly claimed that he knew *everything,* there is evidence that he, singularly or through his deputies, tried to become familiar with *most* things, from atoms (or Adam) to Zoroaster (or zygotes). Thus, those wishing to come to terms with Joyce (all but *Finnegans Wake,* that is, as it is impossible to come to *terms* with it) must do some homework. There are several trots to choose from. The Benstocks' book, now available in a handy paperback (easier to juggle along with *Ulysses* and a pencil) is one that should be in the stable of serious Joyceans. □

* * *

Cree McCree: *Flea Market America;* John Muir Publications; Santa Fe, NM.

The earliest systems of exchange were based on bartering. As the coining of money became nearly universal, the practice faded in all but primitive societies. Later, some speculated that the passion for plastic (i.e., credit cards) would soon render obsolete grubby cash. So far it hasn't. One reason for the failure of plastic to reign supreme is the prevalence of "nonofficial" buying habits in the American public.

When the economy boomed and the use of plastic was at its zenith, most people made their purchases in commercial establishments—that is, stores—which were equipped to process plastic and collect sales taxes. When the economy began to sag, both commercial sales and the use of plastic dropped. There was one area, however, whose vitality blossomed in direct proportion to the commercial establishments' shrinkage. It might be called the "other" market. This market eliminates both inflationary prices and sales taxes. Comprised primarily of garage sales and flea markets, it has long existed, but became ubiquitous only when people could no longer maintain the "style to which they had become accustomed" in the face of spiraling costs and ever-widening unemployment. The author of *Flea Market America* is a "professional flea," thus the book is also a sort of guide to selling as well as buying second-hand goods. It includes an index of major flea markets around the U.S. and offers advice on all aspects of garage sales. The subtitle is "A Bargain Hunter's Guide." It is. □

* * *

Kay Nolte Smith: *Mindspell;* William Morrow; New York.

Summertime reading is a special genre. Comprised primarily of fast-paced fiction, it is perennially in competition with the myriad other activities available. For those whose "summertime reading" extends well beyond the perimeter dictated by the calendar, its lure must also defeat the temptations offered by a new season of TV programming or professional football.

Mindspell is engaging summertime reading. It centers around the scientific drama of genetic engineering and the psychological drama of witchcraft and reincarnation. What makes *Mindspell* somewhat unusual is that Mrs. Smith has for her protagonist a woman who is neither a feminist nor a downtrodden wretch; she is also a moral but unabashed capitalist. The obligatory love interest is included, of course, but tastefully. Much of the twaddle that is presented as contemporary fiction often seems fit only to fuel the charcoal grill or the fireplace. Given the presence of a decently written plot and the ab-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sence of any ideological soapboxes or lurid sensationalism, *Mindspell* can depend on escaping that fate. □

* * *

From the World of Roderick Haig-Brown: Writings and Reflections; Edited by Valerie Haig-Brown; University of Washington Press; Seattle.

Canada is a marvelous country, Pierre Trudeau—to say nothing of Maggie—notwithstanding. Its beer is excellent; Toronto is certainly one of the best cities in North America; its scenery—from the Atlantic to the Pacific—is astonishing. More importantly, it is a free country. Roderick Haig-Brown (1908-1976), although born in England, was a Canadian. He came to settle in the country during what may seem like not the most propitious time: the Depression. However, early on Haig-Brown discovered that self-reliance existed among the people: "So we made our own jobs, jacking logs off the beaches, setting out traps (fur prices held up well), trolling for salmon, even guiding occasional fishermen and hunters." An understanding of the place of man in Nature—the give *and* take—grew in Haig-Brown; he captured that knowledge in thoughtful, brief essays. He was a very civilized man—at times a soldier, a university chancellor, a judge; always a husband and a family man—a cultured man in the best sense of the word. □

WASTE OF MONEY

Wallowing in Rock

James Howard Kunstler: *The Life of Byron Jaynes;* W. W. Norton; New York.

by Larry Williams

D. H. Lawrence was among the first of the post-World War I novelists to explicitly condemn what he called "the counterfeit emotions: drink, drugs, jazz, speed, 'petting', all modern forms of thrill." Lawrence perceived that these impulses would lead to a subtle inversion of values based upon increasingly contrived and mechanistic jolts to the physical sensations. But not even Lawrence could have predicted rock 'n' roll or the spate of "rock journalism" which, by conceit and misdirection, has created a foundation of sand for an edifice of suet.

Mr. Williams writes from Baltimore.

The Life of Byron Jaynes is utterly counterfeit. The book represents a failure not only of technique, but of character. Many writers before Kunstler have lacked judgment but he—a staff writer for *Rolling Stone*—is one of the few actually to pride himself upon it. *Byron Jaynes* is essentially cheap entertainment, a collection of clichés that is less dangerous for what it says than for what it fails to say.

Byron Jaynes, a "legendary" rock 'n' roll singer, supposedly dead for over a decade, is discovered in a small-town supermarket. Rick Sears, the man who discovers him, just happens to be the *Rolling Stone* writer who interviewed Jaynes at the height of his career. What follows is every rock journalist's dream: a taped interview with the living ghost of a bona fide rock legend. There are parallels between Byron Jaynes and Jim Morrison, singer/poetaster of The Doors. Morrison died of a drug overdose more than a decade ago and was buried in Paris. Yet to this day his most ardent fans maintain that he is alive and well and living as a painter in the jungles of Africa. Kunstler's hero has been leading a hermetic existence in the back woods of New England since his feigned overdose in the late 1960's.

Byron Jaynes purports to explore a significant theme: the relationship between rock singing, egomania, and self-destructiveness. But in fact it merely glosses over it. The novel's primary concern is with drug-overdosed parties, cheap sex, and downhill slides. There are only two kinds of characters, those who manipulate and those who self-destruct. Like many third-rate novelists, Kunstler possesses a realistic eye but lacks ironic distance. In this he is as limited as his creations, all of whom are characterized by a hopelessly cynical immanence. This immanence is defined by three vulgar assumptions: that the pressures of rock stardom turn even the most talented performers into junkies; that the world is full of lost children ready to idolize anyone who can sell enough records; and that the rock-music industry is not a blatant commercial venture but a valid artistic enterprise. In its implicit support of this last assumption, *Byron Jaynes* attains farcical proportions. Self-interest forces rock journalists to attribute motives of high art to entertainers who are quite willing to deny such motives. Readers who suppose that rock journalists eventually outgrow their enchantment with the youth cultures are in for a rude awakening. In America, where people fear aging even more than dying, rock 'n' roll is assured of steadily increasing popularity among "mature" audiences. (Indeed, many of rock's most successful practitioners have long since crossed the boundary of age 40—a boundary that was once set at 30.)

Not that Kunstler sees a halo above rock journalists. A character candidly admits that rock 'n' roll is not a revolutionary act, but "just an act." Throughout the novel, Kunstler vacillates between his economic instinct and his better judgment; the former wins out. Thus, rock is maintained as a valid, if quirky, cultural form which exerts, with obvious exceptions, a positive influence upon the young. The exceptions are chronicled in gory, clinical detail. The covert theme of *Byron Jaynes* is that decadence is exhausting but *fun*, rather like a marathon. The novel's nominal climax depicts Byron Jaynes's "appearance" at Woodstock, a pathetic scene in which the singer, after imbibing hundreds of dollars worth of drugs, mounts the catwalk to the stage wearing nothing but a pair of boots. (He has been playing strip poker with Janis Joplin.) Although Kunstler deigns, at rare intervals, to make an implicit moral judgment, he depicts the general aura of drug-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

induced hilarity in the warm tones of experience. He is no more capable than his protagonist of taking the essential step backward.

What Kunstler's work finally demonstrates is that it is unlikely that there will ever be a literary work based upon a movement as mundane and anti-intellectual as that of rock 'n' roll music. *The Life of Byron Jaynes* reveals the cultural shallowness of rock entertainers who, before the institution of rock journalism was invented, were seldom asked to comment on anything more profound than their favorite flavor of ice cream. Rock 'n' roll's earliest innovators, less sophisticated but wiser than the current stock, understood their music properly as a folk medium. Only through pretentious organs such as *Rolling Stone* has it been given pseudointellectual and -political trappings. □

Blind, Deaf & Dumb

Arvo Tuominen: *The Bells of the Kremlin: An Experience in Communism;* University Press of New England; Hanover, NH.

by T. Mark Kulish

In few other fields, insists French Sovietologist Alain Besançon, is the contemporary historian more likely to lose his bearings than in that of Soviet history. There the historian is confronted with a phenomenon so far removed both from civilized man's prior experience in general and from the prior experience of despotism in particular, that he is apt to lose sight of the essence of what lies before him. The phenomenon in question is the attempt to reweave the very fabric of human life in accordance with an all-embracing ideology. Various historians have succumbed to the powerful temptation to explain the horrific experience of Soviet rule by resorting to a far more normal frame of reference than is called for by the record of events since 1917. Some, for example, cite the supposed persistence of a national tradition and culture. The "Russian national character," distorted, maligned, and oversimplified, is somehow made predominantly responsible for the inception, resilience, and nature of Soviet rule. Others lean on the thin reed of what is characterized as a tremendously fateful contest between personalities. Joseph Stalin is cast as the great betrayer of the noble Leninist dream, a terrible and highly fortuitous joker in the otherwise decent and progressive Bolshevik deck of cards. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who so convincingly refutes this thesis, is dismissed as a nonacademic popularizer in some quarters of Soviet scholarship. Even if he is merely that—and he isn't—Solzhenitsyn is not necessarily less sensitive to historical particularities than the academics who criticize him. The fact of the matter is that Solzhenitsyn refuses to avert his gaze from the points of reference which he knows are appropriate to his subject.

The accumulated memoirs of Arvo Tuominen, Secretary General of the Communist Party of Finland for much of the interwar period, here translated by Lily Leino and edited by Piltti Heiskanen, comprise yet another example of the failure to see the forest for the trees. In Tuominen's narrative, the rambling and unliterary quality of which is similar to that of the taped memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, there is no more than what can be found in a hundred other such documents: a sad record of crushed ideals, stricken consciences, misery, brutality, cynical opportunism, arbitrary arrest, and summary execution. Like Khrushchev, Tuominen tends to seek refuge behind the flimsy thesis that one malignant and megalomaniacal individual brought the Leninist enterprise to shame and almost to ruin. He also shares with Khrushchev an uneasy ironic tone that is meant to divert attention from his evident moral failure and to create, in the face of the enormity unfolding around him, a peculiar comic relief. This tone is used to describe crimes, such as an expedition of expropriation in the defeated Russian countryside of the 1930's, Tuominen's impressions of Stalin's sense of humor, and the foibles of Otto Kuusinen, Tuominen's superior and close associate in the highest echelon of the Comintern.

The sincerity of Tuominen's initial idealism may be taken at face value, but one cannot ultimately accept his apologetic. Throughout the book there is a repellent, almost casual confusion between what Tuominen believed at the time of the events he describes and what he subsequently discovered about the realities of Soviet rule, both within the Soviet elite and at the level of the common man. Nowhere is there a decisive moment of unambiguous revulsion, of moral self-rebuke and self-renewal. Tuominen condemns Soviet communism only when he is very directly confronted with the evils arising from its sway: the misery of the collectivized peasants, the liquidation of Finnish comrades, and, finally, the Soviet invasion of Finland in late 1939, whereupon Tuominen, safe in Stockholm, completely severed his close ties with the Soviet government and threw his resources and those of his followers into the defense of his homeland. Even at this dramatic moment, Tuominen, almost by his own admission, followed the path of least resistance. And to the Soviet Union before and after Stalin, Tuominen, his socialist idealism unvanquished, proffers the benefit of the doubt. This was precisely his mistake in the first place: oblivious to the fundamental moral reality of his situation, he never truly learned the real lesson it had to offer. His memoirs are, then, an incidentally informative manifestation of an enduring, and virtually inexcusable, blindness. □

Mr. Kulish writes from Denver, CO.

Postmodern Mush

Terry Eagleton: *The Rape of Clarissa;* University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis.

According to Jonathan Culler, in 1978 a book entitled *Le Roland-Barthes sans peine* appeared in France. Culler explains in *Roland Barthes* (Oxford, 1983) that the book "purported to teach, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eighteen easy lessons, how to speak Roland-Barthes, a language which bears some resemblance to French." Terry Eagleton, a critic who regularly produces in the Marxist mode, has created, no doubt unwittingly, a guide that could be called *Talk Modern Literary Theory Like a Pro.* Post-structuralist, feminist, psychoanalytic, and Marxist forms of cant are all there, ready for excision and reapplication by those who like to sound "with it" at cocktail and/or herb-tea parties. Ostensibly, Eagleton's book is a critical examination of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) a book discussed primarily in classrooms and there but rarely. Not only is *Clarissa* some 2000 pages long, but it was, well, written by Richardson. Eagleton announces that Clarissa is a book whose time has come, or, in his fashionable formulation, "The wager of this book is that it is just possible that we may now once again be able to read Samuel Richardson." We'd like to call that bet, but we feel that it's unfair to take advantage of child's play.

Eagleton, through Walter Benjamin, maintains that books pass into a dormant state and are reactivated when the conditions are right: it's not unlike the suspended-animation scenario used in grade-B science-fiction movies. Richardson is for revitalization because his novels:

> are not only or even primarily literary texts: they entwine with commerce, religion, theatre, ethical debate, the visual arts, public entertainment. They are both cogs in a culture industry and sacred scripture to be reverently conned. In short, they are organizing forces of what, after German political theory, we may term the bourgeois 'public sphere.'

To be briefer: Richardson's novels are long and little read so one can therefore say just about anything he wants to about them: wrote Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice,* "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." Eagleton can use Richardson for his objective. Richardson becomes "the engagingly modern deconstructionist adrift in an infinity of texts," which has a more sophisticated ring to it than "18th-century printer-turned-novelist." The character Lovelace is no mere rake in Eagleton's handling but a "post-structuralist precursor, master of neologism and . . . *double entendre,* given to transcribing grunts and yawns semiotically, mildly radical in politics and fascinated by textual marginalia." What Lovelace did to Clarissa, Eagleton attempts to do to the entire so-called Yale School. □

Throw the Bum Out!

Raymond Mungo: *Confessions from Left Field: A Baseball Pilgrimage;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

Baseball, as far as we know, is still the national pastime, though its position may be usurped by cocaine snorting. If Raymond Mungo's observations have any validity—which is questionable, given his past, which includes the founding of the Liberation News Service and a stint as the "religion editor" of *Mother Jones* —then cocaine is on the upswing. Mr. Mungo cites a source (hardly unimpeachable: an actor who plays on *Laverne & Shirley*) who claims that 70 percent of all ballplayers use cocaine. Say it ain't so.

Baseball's popularity can, in part, be attributed to the regularity of the game. Events are well ordered; playing positions are well defined. Those who are already regular often find baseball to be boring. Those who lack that tidiness find comfort in baseball. Few of these people are as irregular as Mr. Mungo. Mr. Mungo (we assume that he is bipedal), for example, says this about himself, his former comrades, and their consequences, though he doesn't recognize the effects as stemming from his "causes":

> The sixties at Boston University were exciting . . . . In one electrifying coup after another, we placed a black militant into the office of Student Council president, myself into the editorship of the *B.U. News,* drove the Army ROTC off campus, forced the university president into early retirement, burned our draft cards, staged massive protests, sit-ins, and marches. . . . Today . . . Boston is a kind of living hell to me. . . . The steady decline in public education and rise in crime and urban decay have left a city in peril of losing its soul. The tableau that most affected me was the sight of schoolchildren uprooting the flowers in the Public Gardens. . . . Some of these ten-year-olds have switchblades.

Given his antics during the 60's, it would be just to chain him to a post in the Public Gardens, to assign him to his own little circle of the Inferno that he helped create.

Mr. Mungo is no longer a dedicated young rebel who perceives his mission as the betterment of mankind through the destruction of civilization. It's not that he doesn't think that it should be destroyed, it's just that he has entered his autumn years (he was born in 1946, but given the chemical damage to which he's subjected himself, he must be ancient beyond his years) and so he's more concerned with Raymond Mungo than anything or anyone else. The noble sentiments of the 60's radicals are evident in a passage wherein Mr. Mungo describes a recent visit he paid to a demonstration against the construction of the Narita airport in Japan. He announces, "I'm opposed to the Narita airport as much as to the San Francisco airport and all airports. I'm opposed to nuclear power." His credentials are still in order. But then the worm squirms: "But disapproval of the land-ravaging Narita development and the whole direction of nuclear madness in Japan ran squarely up against my natural desire to escape harm, stay alive, and to hold on to my pot." He slithered away.

Confessions from Left Field: A Baseball Pilgrimage is tangentially about baseball. The field selection is deliberate. Mr. Mungo has a void at the center of his existence, so while flailing about, looking for something to stuff it with, he has leached onto baseball. Old hippies don't die, they fester. Someone should take Mr. Mungo out to the ball game and use him for batting practice. □

Corpses on the Couch

Allison Davis: *Leadership, Love & Aggression;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

If the departed witness events on earth, then the publication of this inane book will cause embarrassment not only for its readers but also for its subjects. For men as talented as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, and Martin Luther King, Jr. it would be sheer torture to know that a book as stylistically and intellectually inept as this one had been written about them. These four gifted black leaders endured lives made difficult by prejudice and oppression from whites (slavery in Douglass's case), disloyalty and misunderstanding among blacks, and confusion and strife in their own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

families. In their efforts to cope with these challenges, they were not always successful, sometimes contracting into myopic hatred and narrow bitterness. But often they rose above themselves, articulating with clarity, intelligence, and courage the perceptions and visions of a frustrated people. We can still learn much about black history and hopes from their lives and words. We will learn little about them from Allison Davis, however. Indulging in wildly speculative psychobiography, smug historical pronouncements, shameless hagiography, and lobotomized ideology, Dr. Davis

frequently finds himself without a shred of evidence for his sweeping points. So he puts an impassioned phrase or sentence in italics and considers the case proved. Even if the reader tried to swallow every enormity Dr. Davis offers (e.g., Lincoln suffered from "irrational anger" deriving from a compulsive desire to be loved by everyone), the internal contradictions would make the stew difficult to digest. How, for instance, can we simultaneously praise King for seeing that some things are more important than living *and* the no-nukes forces for asserting that nothing is? Or how can we lament the passing of Judeo-Christian values *and* pathologize the effects of "puritanic morality" on blacks' marvelous "sexual vitality" (as if family disintegration, illegitimacy, and VD were not exacting a terrible toll in the black community)? Perhaps after his death, someone will write a book on Dr. Davis's schizophrenia. □

Of Peter Pan and Pig Heads

Wilhelm Reich: *Children of the Future: On the Prevention of Sexual Pathology;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Little children are wonderful. Everyone loves them. Wordsworth envied their spontaneity and sense of wonder in the presence of nature. Dostoevski believed they were like angels sent to soften our hearts. Jesus taught His disciples to seek Heaven by emulating their trusting faith and guileless humility. But as much as adults may learn from children, children must nonetheless grow up and to do so must be trained in mature modes of thinking and acting. To remain childlike, stressed the Apostle Paul, does not preclude the laying aside of the childish. The hope of remaining forever in the nursery is a vain one, harmless enough in a whimsy like J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, but terribly destructive when taken seriously in works like Wilhelm Reich's *Children of the Future*.

Physiologically, the dividing line between childhood and adulthood is the maturation of the sexual functions during puberty. Since the sex drive unleashes powerful emotions and produces children requiring adult care, society has traditionally stabilized the emotions and provided child care by sanctioning sexual expression only between married adults. Reich will have none of this. The glorious inborn instincts of children should be trusted as the only guide to sexual behavior. Adults just mess things up by imposing their religious and moral values, especially Jews who circumcise. Parents and teachers should simply provide factual information and then get out of the way—unless, of course, a little one needs a bit of help getting started. A 5-year-old boy not yet making genital advances to girls, for instance, is in need of Reich's "orgonomic" treatment.

Because they deny children's "right" to genital gratification, Reich loathes religion, governments on the right and on the left, and the "rotten institution of marriage." Posing as an objective scientist interested only in promoting the good of the child, Reich ignores the studies showing that nothing ensures the emotional well-being of children as much as stability in their parents' marriage and that high-school achievement is closely correlated to religious upbringing, not fornication and masturbation. But then Reich especially abhors the Church, "the main institution that continues the sexual suppression." What he wants instead is a "true religion" permitting children to "grow up as nature or 'God' has prescribed." Indeed, Reich is sure that if men could get rid of cultural "armoring" and live by our instinctive impulses, as animals do, we would be as blissfully in harmony with nature as they are. Eternal children would romp in a peaceful paradise, freed from war, guilt, and confusion. But what kind of paradise is Reich actually offering, especially since he does not share the orthodox view that all of nature fell with man? What would Reich have said about the "good of the child" had he seen the recent studies on how chimpanzees (usually considered our closest biological relatives) often kill their young and each other in the wild? Before his death Reich should have read William Golding's insightful novel about what adolescents likely would do if left alone on a tropical island with all of the advantages of nature and none of the impediments of civilization or religion. Golding's characters behaved rather like chimpanzees, killing one another as they worshipped a fly-covered pig head. Adults like Reich who will not teach their children the "thou shalt nots" of the Lord of Hosts can only abandon them to the murderously natural "true religion" of the Lord of the Flies. (BC) □

Conspiracies and Other Cankers

Jack Lynn: *The Factory;* Harper & Row; New York.

Americans are conspiracy crazy, especially when it comes to matters concerning the Kennedys. Both nonfiction (or so the publishing information claims) and fiction books have appeared—and continue to appear—that *prove* that Jack and/or Bobby were the victims of a conspiracy. The nature of these described theories tends to be such that the news media are under the thrall of the conspirators (the government can't even keep classified information out of print or off the air, so those malefactors really must be tough guys), so the authors can be very selective about what reporting is said to be true or fraudulent. The message they convey is: "Nobody *knows*—but *I* do." It is unsettling to realize that the people who inflict such books upon the reading public are able to drive automobiles, to consume liquor, to vote, and to perform other acts that are limited to those who have passed, presumably successfully, the age of reason.

Jack Lynn was associated with Bobby Kennedy's political campaigns; he produced and distributed TV programs for the senator. It comes as no surprise that *The Factory* is a would-be thriller about the conspiracy behind RFK's assassination. The whole thing is so badly executed that it even makes the script for an inane TV detective show—or *Quincy*—seem to have similarities with "The Mystery of Marie Roget." □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editor's Comment

continued from page 5
convincing juveniles that it is their elemental human right to destroy themselves with drugs, and inducing teenage girls to become mothers, incidentally ruining both the girls' and their offspring's lives. Why is he so firmly set against our common moral and existential destiny? There are no clear answers to this enigma, and it's here where American conservatism ceases to be indebted for its resurgence to the foolishness of its detractors; here it is forced to fight for the rudiments of reason, or, perhaps, even for the survival of the species. And this is not only why it is possible to be an American conservative now, but also why such an ideological choice is the only honorable one in the reality that surrounds us.

These reflections beset me as I read in the *New York Times Book Review* some ravings about a book by a lady who mourns the lot of our children, upon whom brutal, precocious "knowledge" is forced by the Liberal Culture's current educative ideals. The reviewer, an undiscerning, arrogant feminist, called the author's defense of childhood "cantankerous." She devastated the concerned, well-meaning writer because she "seems to be disturbed by the fact that parents are not raising their children in a traditional middle- and upper-middle-class world buttressed by convention and authority—a world that no longer exists." As if the poorest black woman in a housing project wouldn't prefer her child to read *Pinocchio* rather than to peek through the keyhole at scenes of sexual bestiality.

Such petty, venomous, mendacious, feminist-liberal demagoguery trying to erase all permanent values by branding them "middle- and upper-middle-class" may be only a point of departure for a wave of regretful sadness. But it also may turn into an exhilarating realization of the abyss of paltry inanity opened by the *Times'* reviewer; it may occasion an awareness that optimism can be the armor of a modern American conservative. He knows that no world will vanish as long as people miss its inherent spiritual and moral qualities, its edifying valors, its flavors and charms, its bygone moods and tastes. Forms may be torn down by history's vicissitudes, and political and social structures tend to disappear, but spiritual contents and substances linger stubbornly. They are even more tenacious if people's longing for past splendors embellished by time's venerability make those people reevaluate, reformulate, and reframe their aspirations and goals—which remain strikingly the same over millennia, notwithstanding onslaughts from the Liberal Culture, human potential movements, lesbian "family" aberrations, etc., etc. The feudal world, distasteful and unprepossessing as it may look to us today, actually invented the notion of dignity, barely cognizable in Hebrew and classical civilizations: it derived the concept from the cult of honor, another ethical feature that cynical moderns hold in rather low esteem. The feudal forms—material and behavioral—have lain in ruins for centuries, pulverized by Cervantes as well as by economic developments, but the postulate of human dignity became the cornerstone of all ensuing social technologies, ideological manifestos, and democratic catechisms because human minds and hearts institutionalized it as a permanent value. The middle-class bourgeois culture—pilloried for more than a century for its respect for correctitude, propriety, and convention—has almost vanished under the anomic, savage assaults of the joint forces of rock "poetry," vomit art, and entertainment provided by the Hollywood cult of abomination. Yet we assume that the enraged feminist propagandist, invited by the *Times Book Review* to preach the abominable, does not let loose her physiological pressures at a dinner table—which means that she still abides by some legacy of bourgeois convention.

Therefore, if we speak of American conservatism as a novelty, we mean its newly acquired opportunity to defend *our* civilization against the intellectual barbarians and their storm troopers in all walks of American contemporaneity. The witless innocents and the preposterous neurotics are a civilizational menace, the magnitude of which is obvious to anyone with good sense. They rot in the noxious gases of their lifestyles, their monstrously bloated selves; their images are daily amplified by the servile liberal media as the mass program for pop salvation. For the last two decades, instead of feeling that each day means a better America, we feel that every day brings closer the decay of a deathbed on which the forthcoming corpse will be painted in Day-Glo colors by a caste of scurrilous cultural morticians who call themselves liberals, narcissists, paladins of the First Amendment, marijuana-perfumed troubadours of doom, or tycoons of orgasmic deliverance.

But we always were and still are a normative civilization in which sin and virtue can and must be defined for the sake of the common good. Efforts of the human soul and experiences of timelessness are never going to vanish, no matter how rabidly hated and persecuted they are by some degenerate minds on Ivy League faculties and in the consciousness industry's robber barons' Manhattan suites. Maximizing the expansion of intellectual inquiry has suddenly, within the last couple of decades, become a conservative business. This makes the American conservative the most progressive, future-oriented, humane agent of the American civilization, one who believes that life can and will bloom and that hope may flourish. Now the linguistic unity of the adjective *American* and the noun *conservative* makes sense; all traces of contradiction have evaporated from that semantic formula. And in that there is an enormous and fully substantiated pride.

—Leopold Tyrmand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Horror Shows

***National Lampoon's Vacation;* Directed by Harold Ramis; Screenplay by John Hughes; Warner Brothers.**

by Stephen Macaulay

National Lampoon's Animal House (1978) had effects far exceeding any inherent merit. For example, it solidified a number of individuals as "celebrities," such as the late John Belushi. The sophomoric film about demented college students gave rise to innumerable, more tasteless movies of the same ilk that continue to appear with an inexorable regularity: college students, high school students, junior high school students—one awaits the first day-care center-based loony tune. The various commissions and reports about education should be a cause for loud cheering, not dismay, if these movies have any semblance to reality. The characters they portray do little more than belch and copulate, both instinctive processes. Learning or even semicivilized behavior have nothing to do with these "student" movies.

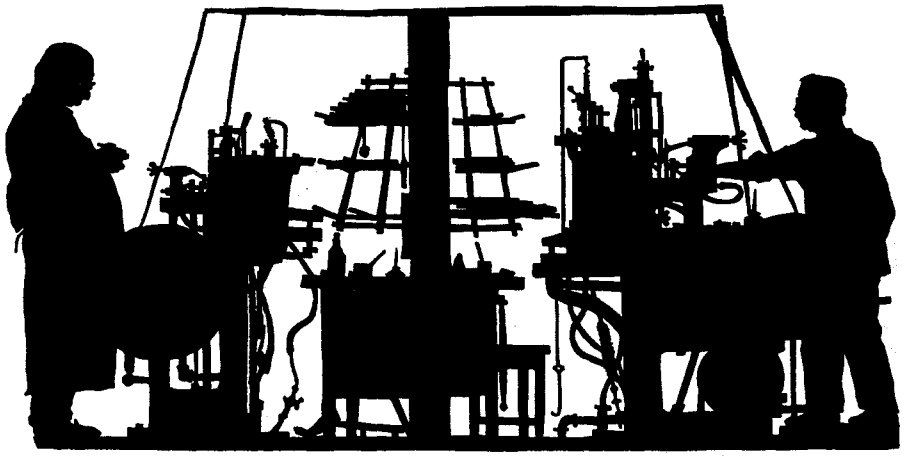
Vacation is *Animal House* all grown up—at least its characters are as adult as they can be expected to be, given their antecedents. It is a great argument against evolution and for devolution. Some movies are tasteless because they are moronic; others are moronic because they are tasteless. The only thing interesting about *Vacation* is that it is both, simultaneously, though that level of interest is on par with poking around in a landfill.

The so-called students in *Animal House* celebrate destructiveness. It's not just college pranks: given a cruise missile, they would have aimed it at the dean's office. *Vacation* takes aim at the family. There's Dad, who seems capable of rudimentary motor functions and little else. Mom makes feints at keeping order, but before long, whatever once inhabited her skull is replaced by a vacuum. Daughter thinks that it's "neat" to have joints in her purse because they are somehow prohibited, though it seems that if they were discovered, the family, as it is, would simply have a smoke-in. Dad gives Son a sip of beer in order to initiate him into manhood; Son takes a 12-ounce sip —Animal House beckons. A great-aunt is treated like a stranger with scrofula *and* herpes simply because she has the abominable taste to be old. The whole package is disgusting. But what is more horrible is the prospect of what bastards it will engender. □

Movies Made Simpleminded

John Ellis: *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video;* Routledge & Kegan Paul; Boston.

Just when you thought that it was safe to go back into the movie theater, *Visible Fictions* emerges. From now on, seeing a movie—a plain, simple, entertainment—is no longer, well, seeing a movie. It never was *just* seeing a movie, but evil old bourgeois ideology acted as 3-D blinders, as it always does. According to Mr. Ellis, a person doesn't buy a ticket to simply watch a movie (which, he notes, is "generally constructed to be seen once and only once," which is curious, given not only the repetitions of cult films like *The Rocky Picture Horror Show,* but Bogart films, Woody Allen productions, *Star Wars* and its offspring, etc., etc., etc.). No, a person buys a ticket for the movie *and,* more importantly, for "the relative privacy and anonymity of a darkened public space in which various kinds of activities can take place." What the "various kinds of activities" are is never made clear. Ellis perceptively points out that "the audience is seated in rows, separated from each other to some degree." Presumably, then, furtive handholding and kissing are ruled out. One activity is typically performed in the dark and in relative privacy: sleeping. Sure enough, Ellis comments, "Sitting still in the dark has overtones of sleep and dreaming: indeed, it is easier to fall asleep in a film than is often admitted." (Books about film are often soporific, too.) If Ellis is correct in his many assertions, then it is surprising that more snores aren't heard in cinemas, for movie viewing as he has it is hard work. The viewer identifies with the "hero and heroine, villain, bit-part player, active and passive character," and even the movie projector. Ellis claims that nothing presented on the screen is a matter of chance, so any canned goods shown must be identified with, as well. Moreover, not only does movie viewing in-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

volve "the phantasy of self as a pure perceiving being," but the viewer must also draw a line between itself (more about the neuter form anon) and the object so that it can be a voyeur. On this subject Ellis says, "Voyeurism implies the power of the spectator over what is seen. Not the power to change it, but the knowledge that the actions being undertaken are played out for the spectator." Is this why slimy types use binoculars to peer into distant buildings and drill hard-to-spot holes into rest-room walls?

According to Ellis, a *film* is commonly defined as being something like the Hollywood productions from 1915 to 1950. He is correct. But then he tries to define what these movies are. He claims that they are simply examinations performed by men who try to determine what women want. In his words, the whole genre of entertainment films "depends on the assumption of a masculine norm and the restless demand to know what the female counterpart to that norm is." Now, it might seem that Ellis has painted himself into a corner: if films only exist so that men can figure out what the female norm is, then why should women bother going to the movies, as they already know? He simply intones, the "processes of identification (narcissism) involve bisexual positions that are not the exclusive prerogative of either socially defined sex." In other words, women (which I always thought were biologically defined) forget that they are women when they go to the movies. Presumably, then, out-of-work androgynous persons have great opportunities in Hollywood: oh, how they would ease the identification processes.

According to Ellis, "Many people feel a profound sense of shame at watching a film alone." Given the psychosexual rigamarole that he applies to the activity, it's surprising that anyone has anything to do with movies, alone or in crowds. If he is correct, everybody might as well make a one-time investment in binoculars and trench coats and let themselves go wandering through parks in the dark. (SM) □

On the Motherhood Maze

by Kathy L. Werner

It was with a sinking feeling that I read Kathi Waite's laudatory review of *Through the Motherhood Maze* by Sanford J. Matthews and Maryann Bucknum Brinley in the February 1983 issue of the *Chronicles*. The piece is scarcely more than an apologia for absentee motherhood. Motherhood is treated in the piece as a malaise which often causes "near-total emotional collapse." Motherhood is not to be enjoyed and relished, but rather endured or escaped. Mrs. Waite implies that (1) only a rare and exceptional woman ("the wonder and envy of her peers") can tolerate the full-time mothering of her children; and (2) a mother's love of herself and pursuit of her own fulfillment will assure happiness for her children.

In answer to Mrs. Waite's first point, according to Rita Kramer (*In Defense of the Family*), Selma Fraiberg (*Every Child's Birthright*), the accepted wisdom of the centuries, and ordinary common sense, it is unlikely that anyone will love or care for children better than their own mother. (The exceptions to this rule are the abusive or neglectful parents —still a very small minority.) I would suggest that it is a peculiar phenomenon of post-Friedan America that so many young mothers opt for success on men's terms (money and careers) rather than staying home to care for their infants. In their stampede for self-actualization they often ignore, discount, or rationalize the needs of their children. And the "quality-time" argument used by so many women is essentially invalid during a child's first three years, according to Kramer.

The right response to Mrs. Waite's assertion that "[t]o attempt to become the be-all and end-all to a child is, for some, self-destructive" is Kramer's wise observation: "of course, no mother can be there every single moment, nor can any mother provide constant and complete satisfaction, an expectation that is not only unrealistic but not even desirable. Little disappointments and minor frustrations are as much a part of experience as pleasures and fulfillment. They shouldn't be sought out on principle or used to rationalize arrangements clearly not a baby's advantage when they're avoidable, though, because nature and necessity do a good enough job of providing them for us."

Admittedly, there are many women who do not have the economic option of raising their own children. However, Mrs. Waite made no mention of financial considerations, but spoke of the woman who returned to work out of a perceived emotional need. Mothering one's own child full time is not something to be chosen impartially from a list of "Things I'd Like to Do." It is a challenging responsibility for every woman who wants her baby to develop to his full potential. To flourish, a baby needs his mother far more than he or she needs the latest learning toy or the costliest nursery schools.

Possibly Mrs. Waite's most misleading claim is that a "woman who before motherhood led an active life in a responsible job may not be able to find unconditional happiness in 24-hour mothering." Is mothering, therefore, an inactive, irresponsible task? What job could be more momentous than the rearing of competent and caring human beings? To her statement that unconditional happiness is not a given of motherhood, I must agree. But one is unlikely to find "Unfettered Bliss" listed on any job description. Motherhood, like other adult occupations, requires the postponement or sublimation of certain personal desires. And just as it takes patience, self-control, and hard work to love another human being on a continuing basis, so it requires an act of the will to learn how to mother one's offspring. But in learning to serve

Mrs. Werner is a full-time mother in New York.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them one can discover a true and deep joy far more enduring than happiness.

Full-time mothers are the key to the survival of the traditional family in America. The very nature of their "uncompensated" jobs makes them an endangered species in our affluent nation and an anachronism among a people hell-bent on "finding themselves." At-home mothers and children both deserve much more thoughtful treatment than that accorded them by Mrs. Waite. □

Mrs. Waite Replies:

While Mrs. Werner makes some interesting observations, she has (A) missed the point of my piece and (B) simplified motherhood to a degree that overlooks not only its delicate nuances, but also an obvious state of affairs. Her constant referral to the *child* as an "infant" or "baby" leaves the impression that she is a fairly new member of the Society of Motherhood. She seems oblivious to the fact that the term *child* also encompasses 7-, 11-, and 16-year-olds, as a more seasoned mother can readily attest. Some of these children, dependent on age and degree of maturity, are well able to take care of themselves for varying periods of time and do not need to be constantly coddled, nor do they regularly coo.

The responsibility of being a mother never ends; as I stated before, it is "a career spanning a lifetime." However, responsibility is not the same as parental control. As parents, our most important function is to instill in our children a set of principles and sense of decency. As time diminishes control, we must trust our children to draw on what we have worked so hard to teach. The constantly "mothered" child is not always a "better" child.

Mrs. Werner states that motherhood is to be "enjoyed and relished," and I quite agree. However, the fact remains that not all women will agree, for the act of giving birth insures that a woman is a mother only in a biological sense. The

SURVEY

TWO SPECIAL ISSUES

POLAND UNDER JARUZELSKI

Part I, Vol. 26, No. 3 (116)
Part II, Vol. 26, No. 4 (117)

The "state of war" has been suspended, but the war goes on. These two special issues of **SURVEY** on Self-Occupation and Resistance in Poland provide a vivid picture of the struggle of the Polish people against the regime's attempt to re-impose totalitarian control over a society which recovered its sense of identity and freedom in the period of Solidarity. **SURVEY** conveys to the Western reader an understanding of the issues involved, a feeling of the continuing historical movement, and telling glimpses of some of the protagonists: Jaruzelski, Rakowski, Urban, Walesa, Bujak, Glemp. It gives a unique insight into the wider implications of Polish developments in terms of East-West relations, and scrutinizes Western attitudes to them.

It also contains a sensational Party document which has never been disclosed:

The Polish Counterpart to Khrushchev's Secret Speech

Annual subscription: UK £17 US $39 Elsewhere £20
Single copies: UK £5 US $11 Elsewhere £6

SURVEY Editorial office:
Ilford House, 133 Oxford Street, London W1R 1TD
England
(Tel. 01-734 0592)

SURVEY Subscription Office:
59 St. Martin's Lane, London WC2 4JS, England
(Tel. 01-836 4194)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

number of teenage mothers—and I mean the pre-18-year-olds, which makes these mothers, by legal definition, children themselves—is at an all-time high. Mrs. Werner proclaims that a child's "own" mother is the best mother, but how does a child successfully raise another child? On the other hand, there are loving, caring adults who are unable to have their own biological children, who make herculean efforts to get through governmental red tape to adopt children. Are these mothers, because they played no physical role in the creation of their children, inferior to the teenagers or to any other women who have borne children? The wisdom of the ages—think only of Moses—indicates that they aren't.

Certainly being a mother is fulfilling. But I must reiterate the point I made in my original article: "not every woman is meant to be a full-time mother." Perhaps these women should never have borne children; however, given the existence of the offspring, the point becomes moot. Perhaps I didn't go far enough. Look at the battered and beaten children whom Mrs. Werner dismisses as a "very small minority." Many of them are at the mercy of stay-at-home mothers who obviously cannot cope. Consider those children who are let out in the morning and who are readmitted only at night, treated much the same as the family pet. These children are victims; literally millions of them exist. And many of their mothers are 24-hour-a-day mothers in the sense that they do not hold paying jobs, nor are they pursuing feminist lifestyles. A mother who stays home is not necessarily a guarantee that she is a caring, devoted mother; she may simply prefer soap operas or hobbies or kaffeeklatsches to either a job *or* her children.

A woman who is emotionally unable to cope with around-the-clock mothering deserves help and advice (sometimes in the form of books like *Through the Motherhood Maze*) just as a woman with a physical handicap does. Mrs. Werner refuses to admit the existence of a woman who, though she cannot tolerate her children 24 hours a day, is *still* a caring, well-intentioned, if imperfect, mother. These mothers *do* exist; these mothers need help—as do their children. □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Consistency

The wanton murder by a Soviet military jet fighter of 269 unarmed, helpless persons in a civilian aircraft near Sakhalin Island may shock and repel but should not surprise. The act is consistent with innumerable massacres of innocents which stem from the very nature of communism. Beginning with the bestial eradication of opponents after the revolution in 1917, the history of communism has been the history of ruthless elimination of any individual or group that the communist ideological assassins deem proper for demise, regardless of their objective transgression. The right to kill is the only precondition for the success of the communist doctrine in practice, and, over the decades, has become the only strictly observed, functional law of the Soviet state. It started with the slaughter of peasants who opposed collectivization; continued through the largest wholesale homicide in annals in the gulag; through the Katyn carnage of 11,000 gagged and handcuffed Polish officers; through the bloodbaths of grave ditches in the Ukraine and Baltic states after World War II, where unaccounted numbers of humans were and are butchered by KGB —always without any weapon in their hands, defenseless in the face of machine guns and flamethrowers. They are not unlike those who were caged in a passenger airliner on that fatal first day of September; the Soviet-style, indiscriminate and cold-blooded mayhem has just been extended to aerospace.

The "moral" archtenet on which the Soviet civilization rests is that communism is mankind's savior; thus, the communists can take people's lives at will. This in itself makes it clear that no civilization based on normative morality as the source of law can coexist on this planet with the Soviet one which claims the right to murder on its own, nonnegotiable terms. As our baneful century nears its end, the ultimate iniquity of communism emerges as more profoundly antihuman than what we thought of as an abyss of fascism and nazism measured on the philosophical scales. The nazi monster looked at evil and declared it more desirable than good: a relatively simple human folly. The communist looks evil in the eye and sees good in it: the most despicable atrophy of humanness that deserves unmitigated hatred. And no less scorn should be reserved to those who—according to the folksy, marvelous, precise, American political idiom—are soft on communism: they see the manifestations of evil and refuse to notice them.

The Korean airliner tragedy, dismal as it is, provides the U.S. with an unexpected opportunity to win a major, if not decisive, battle in the ideological war of words that has been waged since the end of World War II. The Soviets, in a desperate attempt to avoid universal outrage, resort to the most rabid, but also primitive, techniques of lying, rarely used since the time of Stalin's manuals of agitprop, when Soviet population was practically and hermetically sealed off from the outside world. Rarely before has the very truth that communism is an edifice erected on a monstrous, monumental reversal of truth, so egregious that it defies reason, been so clearly visible to mankind. Unfortunately, it appears that President Reagan and his policy planners are failing to take advantage of this unique situation. More unfortunate is the historical trendline: this situation, given the history of the Soviets, won't be unique for long. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Middle East Quagmire

It seems that Mr. Reagan's Waterloo is somewhere in the Levant. To please "Arabists," both in the State Department and in his own entourage, he stubbornly disregards what some wiser Americans, and experienced Israeli experts, believe should *not* be done there. Under the influence of people who adore Saudi Arabia and its giant accumulation of dough, he apparently has decided that it's up to the U.S. to decide the fate of the region; that is euphemistically called serving America's interests. A tiny crumb of knowledge would have told him that—except for the Prophet Mohammed himself—no one has *ever* accomplished such a feat, neither the Romans, nor the Crusaders, nor the colonial powers of the last century. Then Israelis tried to establish a Western presence in Lebanon and have succeeded in doing that. Mr. Reagan seems to wish to turn Lebanon into Vermont, where town meetings determine the sociopolitical existence of a coherent community. Rarely has a foreign-policy concept appeared more inept, if not grotesque, to a reasonable observer of the international scene. □

Logic

The momentous and impressive event took on so much of the left-of-center coloring that its impact has all but vanished in the haze of shrill radicalism: 250,000 people marched in Washington, DC, invoking the name of Martin Luther King and carrying placards with the words "Jobs, Peace, and Freedom!"

The first demand seems to us quite legitimate. The second is ill-addressed: we know little of a potential threat to peace looming in the environs between the Lincoln Memorial and Pennsylvania Avenue. The same can't be said about other political disposition centers in the world, which are more manifestly bulging with evidence of thinly veiled bellicosity. Clearly, the American marchers' order was only used for perverse propaganda. What worried us most was the call for freedom, which somehow impairs our perception of the marchers' honorable intentions. Our sense of coherent interrelation between fact and word tells us that Dr. King's worshippers have all the freedom imaginable. They can assemble freely, express opinions, demonstrate, congregate, form organizations, vote, voice their requests, democratically elect their representatives to a political body, openly denounce whomever they wish to denounce, set standards, and raise challenges without any restraint. They are free to create any reality they believe will serve them better. What other liberty is denied to the marchers? Perhaps only one: the freedom to coerce others to accept what they and their leaders nonnegotiably want to extract from society through the most antidemocratic means possible. Is it *that* freedom they clamor for? □

Twisted Notions

The opposition to Reagan, the first conservative President since Calvin Coolidge, is relying of late on a prodigious and spectacular concept: turning half of the U.S. population against him. This is exactly what the so-called political "gender gap" amounts to. The entire anti-Reagan media spectrum—from the liberal *Washington Post, New York Times,* and all the outlets of corporate radicalism in the TV industry, to the overtly pro-communist and pro-Soviet "journals" on the order of *Mother Jones* and *The Nation* —blast at the highest possible intensity and volume a factitious, spurious, utterly unproven slogan that "women are against Reagan." Shady pollsters who can produce any kind of "mass attitude" or "widespread public opinion" by manipulating questionnaires, forms, and ad-lib utterances, work mostly for the liberal cultural establishment, and they gleefully support the grandiosely structured sham. No one seems to remember that the ERA was defeated by *women;* no one takes any pains to analyze the situation from the point of view of socio-ideological synergy. What's most astounding, however, is Reagan's and his close advisers' ineptitude in dealing with the crudely devised scheme.

One might suppose that the President would have enough imagination and sense of efficient polemics to stand up and state clearly that there is no—or very little—evidence that the women of America are against him or his policies. There is, admittedly, ample proof that American *feminists* and feminism as a political movement are after him, his hide, his very survival. He could also declare that there's small wonder at this circumstance, since contemporary feminism is one of the firmest fixtures of the American political left—whose agenda is to undermine, subvert, and ultimately destroy the social and cultural institutions upon which rest America, its democracy, its freedom, its promise, and its hope for mankind. *And* that because a conservative President is a formidable obstacle to the elimination from this land of the American concept of freedom, any latent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

totalitarian tool that can be used to minimize his power and influence must be put into operation. Feminism is a totalitarian movement easily disguised as a lofty liberationist proposition. It thus gets sheepish, imbecilic support from the liberal cultural powers that be. Why President Reagan is unable to pinpoint and expose once and forever this brutal twisting of basic notions is beyond our comprehension. Confrontation with feminism—as both an idea and a political trend—is inevitable, and not even myriad concessions to the complex, if confused, concepts of "women's rights" will engender any reorientation of the radicalism of feminist organizations and agendas. Why not have that face-off now, when a considerable stock of antifeminist emotions, energies, and dispositions still exists among American women (and there is plenty of evidence for it)? It looks to us like a matter of classic bollixing on the part of the White House "tacticians" (*read:* appeasers). □

The Dream that is Dixie

One of the finest traditions that this country has can be found in that spiritual portion known as the South. Certainly there are geographical boundaries that can be, and are, pointed to as dividing lines; one can also define the South on the basis of the states that constituted the Confederacy. Still, it seems to us that the South represents far more than a land where cotton grew or a political entity. It is something more profound, as it involves a way of life, a state of mind, an approach to the ends of existence. The South, the physical, tangible one, is changing. Like the rest of this country—and the world—it is becoming homogenized. Houston, Atlanta, Birmingham all seem fairly familiar to one at home in Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia. But the spirit of the place, in isolated instances, lives on. One manifestation of that spirit is *The Southerner,* a quarterly review of history, literature, and politics that hails from McClellanville, South Carolina.

Clearly, *The Southerner's* initial efforts will be to close its ranks, to stake a claim on the area of endeavor in which it will toil. We hope, however, that the *Southerner's* editors work toward broadening their field. The spirit of the South is something that is needed beyond that realm's tacit borders, perhaps now more than in the day of the Agrarians. Today, the technology that Southern thinkers have always defined themselves against and in relation to is rapidly encroaching upon man, who may forget that he essentially springs from the soil. A Southern influence upon the modern American culture will be a gain for all. □

JOURNALISM

A Mad Dog, an Englishman

One Alexander Cockburn from England, the *Village Voice's* political spokesman and conscience, is on record as:

> —supporting Soviet oppression and slaughter anywhere in the world;
> —supporting communist massacre by any means, perpetrated by any leftist henchmen disguised as guerrillas, campesinos, urban terrorists, etc.;
> —supporting the deadly and cruel extermination, by means of any weaponry whatsoever, of any opposition anywhere to communist subjugation, whether it is executed by Soviet troops, Soviet agents, or bloodthirsty maniacs calling themselves "revolutionaries";
> —supporting mayhem against those who resist communist slavery by any Soviet or local secret-police in any part of the globe where the Soviets or their mercenaries are in power;
> —cozily waiting in New York City for the communist takeover of the world.

In the meantime, living well in and off America and coddled by the *Wall Street Journal,* Mr. Cockburn specializes in insulting various deceased who happened to be his betters. Not long ago, using a typewriter that could have been oiled with the blood of Afghan freedom fighters, Israeli children slain by the PLO, and Polish workers butchered by communist assassins, Mr. Cockburn exulted about the death of Arthur Koestler. Here is his expression of elation upon Herman Kahn's passing:

> The world is not the poorer for the passing of this founding Neocon who liked nothing better than to tell people to stop worrying and learn to love the bomb.

One is immediately struck by the Hitleresque morphology of Mr. Cockburn's mind and his bid to decide what makes the world poorer or richer in terms of human lives. In other words, he arrogates to himself the right to determine who should live and who should not. This is exactly what brings him so close to genocidal maniacs like Dzerzhinsky, Stalin, Beria, Arafat, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, etc. If he were braver, he might have joined the Red Brigades, the Weather Underground, the Symbionese Liberation Army, helping to decide whether Aldo Moro, the Pope, or Earl Mountbatten were entitled to live. But he prefers an easier way: the offspring of the British leisure class now serves the cause of political mass homicide as a boudoir revolutionary, a pet of the mentally debilitated portion of the New York corporate upper class, which, in turn, features him in its journals as proof of its "enlightened," "fair" liberalism. Quite in contrast to all the Cockburns of this world, *we* believe that until Manhattan is fumigated and rid of such potential executioners and their deranged backers in high-finance America, the universe will not be any richer—at least in our lifetime. □

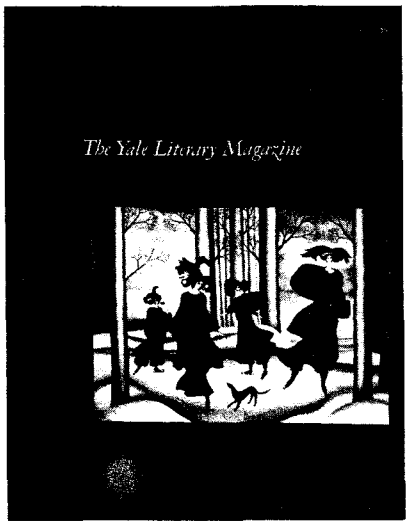
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The center of a literary and political squall."

— The New York Times

"An extraordinarily readable journal of ideas."

— Fortune



Oleg Prokofiev on his father's music • A. L. Rowse on Edmund Wilson • Leonid Pasternak on the Pasternak family • The diaries of Roy Fuller • Malcolm Cormack on the art of George Stubbs • E. M. Cioran on himself • Lewis H. Lapham on knowledge • Rosalyn Tureck on Bach • Mark Girouard on Victorian mansions • Richard Brookhiser on the art of Igor Galanin • Peter Witonski discovering the writings of Bruno Schulz • William F. Buckley, Jr. on our fading schools • A story by Andrei Platonov • Jean MacVean uncovering the poetry of Thomas Blackburn • I. E. Ouvaroff on the fable of Marc Chagall • Bryan Griffin on the Philistines • Otto J. Scott on servility • Martin Seymour-Smith on England • Curtis Cate on the follies of Walter Lippmann • A. L. Rowse on Cosgrave's Dublin • Lev Navrozov exposing the *New York Review of Books* • Richard Brookhiser scolding the *Nation* • Lev Navrozov exposing the *New York Times* • John Chamberlain reminiscing about journalism • A novella by Mircea Eliade • George Gilder on money and freedom • Roy Strong on Nicholas Hilliard and the English miniature • The letters of Arthur Schnitzler • I. E. Ouvaroff on the paintings of William Bailey • A forgotten play by Eugene Schwarz • J. Jean Aberbach on his friendship with Fernando Botero • Uwe Siemon-Netto on the fall of Europe • Sir Ernst Gombrich on Franz Schubert and the Vienna of his time • Lewis H. Lapham on ignorance • Annie Dillard on faith • Ezra Pound on music • Vasily Rozanov on himself • Thomas Molnar on Jean-Paul Sartre • I. E. Ouvaroff on Will Barnet • Gordon Craig's Paris Diary • Boris Goldovsky on opera • William French on Pound's Hemingway connection • Luigi Barzini on the British • Homage to Elie Nadelman • Curtis Cate on Le Corbusier • Raël Jean and Erich Isaac on the utopian think tanks • Also Philip Larkin, W. Nelson-Cave, Charles Causley, Charles Edward Eaton, Joseph Brodsky, Douglas Dunn, Hamish Guthrie, J. C. Hall, John Heath-Stubbs, Leslie Norris, Anne Ridler, Rudolph Schirmer, Michael Schmidt, Tarjei Vesaas, Christopher Fry, Eugene Dubnov, Richard Eberhart.

When *The Yale Literary Magazine* was founded, Beethoven was completing the *Missa Solemnis*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* appeared, and Emerson began his *Journal*. The names of a few authors we have published since then — Rudyard Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Vincent Benét, Thornton Wilder, John Dos Passos — show that some of our judgments have been quite timely.

Today, as ever, it is unique talent, not just prominent names, that we seek. When we publish Lewis H. Lapham, or E. H. Gombrich, it is not because one is the editor of *Harper's* and the other a highbrow "name"; what they contribute to our pages is unique, and that is the reason for their inclusion. The same is true of all our authors.

The Yale Literary Magazine still stands alone.

Our magazine is not published fortnightly on newsprint, to extol this week's writers, expound on last week's thinkers, and crumble to dust a week thereafter. The paper we print on permits the most accurate color reproduction of any magazine in the world and is guaranteed to endure for centuries. And we seek to publish and reproduce what will last at least as long.

But *The Yale Literary Magazine* is now under attack.

So boldly, so uncomprisingly have our authors spoken on issues of culture and politics that the academic tastemakers of the university in whose shadow the magazine was born have sought to suppress it as a source of intellectual dissent. Their actions, as George Will remarked in a recent **60 Minutes** broadcast dealing with the controversy, have cast doubt on "the integrity of a major American university," and compelled the magazine to defend its freedom in court.

Our freedom endures, and *The Yale Literary Magazine* remains as independent, as passionate, as controversial as when it first addressed the nation. In the words of reviewers, it is "elegantly produced" (**The Washington Post**) "in the fine book tradition" (**Folio**), "sophisticated" (**American Spectator**), "impressive" (**Los Angeles Times**), "highbrow" (**Time**). "This spendid journal" (**Anthony Harrigan**), "strikingly handsome" (**Chronicle of Higher Education**), "downright lovely to look at" (**James J. Kilpatrick**), is also "good, mean fun" (**Los Angeles Times**). In short, *The Yale Literary Magazine* is "an organ of the *intelligent* intelligentsia" (**Eugene V. Rostow**).

Join us, and see for yourself why "*The Yale Literary Magazine* is one of the few magazines now being published in the United States that attempts a serious encounter with literature, with thought, with ideas."*

The Yale Literary Magazine

Since 1821

The Yale Literary Magazine is a publication of American Literary Society, Inc., a non-profit organization. *Lewis H. Lapham

Order Form: Introductory Rates

☐ I wish to subscribe for ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 year(s) at $24 a year ☐ Check box if this is a gift.

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

☐ My check for $ _____ is enclosed ☐ Bill me

Checks are payable to:
The Yale Literary Magazine
Box 243-A Yale Station
New Haven, Ct. 06520

Please charge my ☐VISA ☐MC ☐AMEX
Card # _____
Expiration Date:
For faster service call (203) 624-8400.

D 4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rockford Institute
934 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED